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THE WORKS

OF THE

LEARNED AND REVEREND

JOHN SCOTT, D. D.

SOMETIME RECTOR OF ST. GILES'S IN THE FIELDS.

A NEW EDITION, IN SIX VOLUMES.

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SERMON I

PREACHED BEFORE

THE HONOURABLE MILITARY COMPANY AT ST. CLEMENTS DANES, JULY 25, 1673.

EPHES. vi. 11.

Put on therefore the whole armour of God.

THAT which giveth us the advantage of brutes, and ranketh us in a form of beings above them, is the rational and immortal spirits we carry about with us: as for our bodies, they are but clods of earth steeped in phlegm, and kneaded into human shapes, and do derive their pedigree from the same principles with flies and scare bees, and the most contemptible animals: but our souls are of a pure alloy, and by their nature are allied to angels, and do border upon God himself; and it is by the title of these rational natures that we are now superior to beasts, and hope hereafter to be equal with angels: and yet, besotted creatures that we are, how do we prefer our bodies before our souls, employing all our cares in providing for and pampering of our flesh, as if our reason were given us for no other end but to be cook and tailor to our bodies, to study sauces and fashions for them; whilst our immortal spirits pine and famish, and, like forlorn things, are wholly abandoned by us to wretchedness and misery. That it is so, is apparent by too many woful instances. The poor labourer, that sweateth and toil-

eth all day for his body, thinketh much at night to bestow upon his soul a prayer of a quarter of an hour long: the tradesman, that thinks no industry too much to make a fair and ample provision for his body, grudgeth to expend a few good thoughts and endeavours in the purchase of an eternal inheritance for his soul: the soldier, that shuts up his body in ribs of iron and coats of mail, to secure it from the sword and bullets of his enemies, exposeth his soul unarmed to all the fiery darts of the Devil; and though his understanding hath as much need of knowledge, as his head hath of an helmet; his will as much need of justice, as his breast of a buckler; his affections as much need of fortitude and temperance, as his legs and hands have of greaves and gauntlets; yet he ventures them all naked amongst a thousand enemies; as if his little toe or finger were more dear and precious to him than his immortal soul. But if we would be good soldiers and good men too, we must arm ourselves within as well as without; and as we harness our bodies in iron, so must we put on upon our souls the whole armour of God: and this is the counsel of the apostle in the text which I have chosen for the subject of my ensuing discourse; *Put on therefore the whole armour of God.* By the whole armour of God here, we are to understand the Christian religion; that is, the doctrine and duties of Christianity; as you may see at large, from the fourteenth to the eighteenth verse of this chapter, where the apostle instances in the particular parts of which this whole armour consisteth. The first is the girdle of truth, that is, the doctrine of the gospel, in opposition to all heathen errors and heretical insinuations; the second is, the breastplate

of righteousness, that is, sincere and faithful obedience unto Christ; the third is, the preparation of the gospel of peace, that is, the practice of Christian charity and peaceableness; the fourth is, the shield of faith, that is, the belief of the promises and threats of the gospel; the fifth is, the helmet, that is, the hope of salvation; the sixth is, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and the last is, prayer and watchfulness. These are the several parts of this divine armour: in which you see are reckoned both the doctrines and duties of Christianity. By the putting on of these therefore, nothing else can be meant, but only our hearty belief of the doctrines, and our sincere practice of the duties of Christian religion: for to this sense the phrase is frequently used in the New Testament. Thus, when the apostle exhorteth us *to put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, in Rom. xiii. 14. it is plain he meaneth nothing else but believing in Christ and obeying him. And so also when in Ephes. iv. 22, 24. he exhorteth them to *put off the old man, and put on the new*, he meaneth nothing else, but that they should forsake their heathen superstitions and idolatrous uncleannesses, and conform all their actions to the new rule of Christian purity.

In the words thus explained, you have, first, something implied; which is, that the Christian religion is armour of defence unto the souls of men.

Secondly, something expressed, that if we mean it should arm and defend us, we must believe and practise it.

First, That the Christian religion is armour of defence unto the souls of men; that is, it is of the same

use to men's souls, as armour is to their bodies: for as the end of armour is to defend men's bodies, and secure them against the weapons of their enemies; so the great end and design of the Christian religion is to defend men's souls from whatsoever is hurtful and injurious to them. Now there are but two sorts of evils in the world, both which are injurious to the souls of men. The first is the evil of sin, and the second is the evil of misery; and against both these Christianity doth strongly arm us.

First, for the evil of sin, which upon several accounts is injurious to men's souls: it overthroweth the order and economy of their natures, enslaving their reasons to their passions and appetites; as it discomposeth the tranquillity of their minds, by inspiring them with wild and inconsistent passions; and it disturbeth the peace of their consciences, by suggesting black thoughts and horrible reflections to them: these and several other ways is vice injurious to our souls. And therefore it is the design of Christianity to arm us against this great evil, to secure and defend us against all the weapons of unrighteousness. Hence the apostle telleth us, that *the grace of God*, that is, the gospel, *was revealed from heaven* for this very end, *to teach us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*, Titus ii. 11, 12. And St. John telleth us, that *for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil*, 1 John iii. 8. This was the errand of the Son of God into the world, and the design of that incomparable religion he taught, *to destroy the works of the Devil:* and

indeed if we consider what an effectual course Christianity taketh to defend us against sin, we must confess it to be the most excellent armour in the world: for,

1. First, It restraineth us from it by the purest laws. The laws of Christian religion have made so great a gulf between our sins, and separated us from them by such an infinite distance, that it is impossible for them to come at us, or for us to go to them, whilst we persevere in our obedience to them: for they do not only forbid us that which is really evil, but do also command us to abstain from all appearances of evil, and do remove us so far out of the territories of sin, that they will not permit us to approach the borders of it: and lest we might unhappily go farther than we should, they forbid us to go as far as we may, and will not allow us so much as to come within the skirts and suburbs of iniquity. For in moral actions the distance is frequently so small between the utmost of what is lawful and the nearmost of what is sinful, that there are very few men in the world can set a rule to themselves, Hitherto may I go, and no farther; and therefore, without any infallible guide to point out to them the just and particular limits of lawful and unlawful, men can hardly be secure, whilst they dwell upon the frontiers and neighbourhood of sin; and therefore the gospel commands us at least to endeavour to keep at distance from sinning, and not come near the pitch, lest we be defiled by it. Neither doth it only restrain us from outward acts, but also from inward inclinations to evil: we must be so far from murdering our brother, that we must not hate or wish ill to him; so far from practising rapine and oppression, that we must not so much as covet our neighbour's posses-

sions; so far from acting adultery, that we must not look upon a woman to lust after her. Thus the laws of our religion, you see, do strike at the very root of sin, and choke the very springs from whence those bitter streams derive; and do not, like other laws, merely restrain our outward practice, but also lay reins upon our desires, and extend their empire to freeborn thoughts. In this respect therefore Christianity doth most effectually arm us against sin, as it restraineth us from it by the purest laws that ever were.

Secondly, By dissuading us from it with the most prevailing arguments. There is no article of the Christian faith but is a copious topic of motives to virtue: and if men would but take the pains to extract from each their proper and just inferences, and to ponder those great obligations to gratitude and duty which the several articles of their religion do devolve upon them, Christianity must necessarily do wonders in the world, and work strange alterations in the lives and manners of Christians: for there is no stone that it leaveth unturned, nothing within us that is capable of persuasion but it addresseth to. To win upon our hope, it proposeth to us a happiness so extensive, that we can neither desire nor imagine beyond it; a happiness that is equal to the utmost capacities of our natures, and parallel to the longest duration of our beings; that hath not the least tang of misery in it, no bitter farewell nor appendant sting to it; but is all quintessence composed of the purest extracts of joy and pleasure. What greater motive can be urged to dissuade us from sinning, than the hope of such a happiness as doth so infinitely outbid all that vice can proffer us, and is weighty

enough to preponderate all its temptations, though all the world were in the counterbalance? But if we are so wedded to our lusts, that no hope of advantage will disengage us from them, Christianity thunders against them all the dreadful threats that are capable of scaring us into sober purposes: it denounceth unquenchable fire and eternal vengeance against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; and alarms our fears with all the inconceivable horrors that an everlasting hell menaceth. And that this may not scare us only from open profaneness into close and secret hypocrisy, it assureth us, that there will be a day of fearful account, and wherein all that we acted behind the curtain shall be brought into public view upon an open theatre, and proclaimed to all the world by the trumpet of God and the voice of an archangel. And that we may be assured that these terrors of the Lord are not mere bugs and scarecrows, it giveth us a fearful example of God's severity against sin in the death and sufferings of his own Son; wherein he hath proclaimed himself an implacable enemy to vice, in that he would not pardon it without the blood of the most beloved darling of his soul. And certainly he that, after this assurance of God's severity against sin, can dare to be wicked, is a most valiant and courageous sinner: and if, after he hath confronted the tribunal of God, and outfaced the flames of hell, he can laugh at this fearful example of divine severity, he is fit for a reserve or a forlorn hope, and may boldly venture to be wicked through all the terrors in the world. But if men should be so senselessly wicked, as not to be persuaded either by hope or fear, yet perhaps ingenuity may prevail; which that it may, Christianity presseth

us with the most endearing motives in the world: it sets before us the infinite obligations which God hath laid upon us, in bestowing upon us our beings, in surrounding us with his careful providence, but above all, in giving his Son to die for us; and to infer this last, it representeth our most kind and merciful Redeemer groaning under the cruelty of our sins; it bringeth forth his bloody garments, as Anthony did those of the murdered Cæsar, and spreadeth them before our eyes, and in the most passionate manner accuseth our sins for being his assassins and murderers: and can we find in our hearts to hug his executioners, to harbour the traitors that slew our friend, our friend that loved us a thousand times better than we love ourselves? Surely, if we should, we should deserve to be branded for the most disingenuous and most ill-natured persons in the world: for it is impossible that any kindness should oblige us, if we find in our hearts to be wicked, in spite of all the love of God, and all the wounds and blood of our Redeemer. Thus you see with what powerful arguments Christianity doth arm us against sin.

Thirdly, It armeth us against it with the most powerful grace and assistance. Christianity is animated with a divine Spirit, that hath all along enlivened and actuated it, and rendered it in all ages so successful and victorious: it was by virtue of this divine Spirit that it triumphed, in its very infancy, over all the power and malice of the world, that, like the palm-tree, it grew by depression, and conquered in the midst of flames; insomuch that within less than an hundred years after the death of Christ, it had made successful inroads into the remotest kingdoms, and captivated a great part of mankind into

the belief and obedience of it; and though it found the minds of men prepossessed with a contrary religion, and consequently had mighty prejudices to combat before it could come to lay siege to their reason; yet it charged like a thunderbolt through all these obstacles; and with its spiritual artillery battered down all opposition before it, and wrought such strange alterations in the world, that the world scarce knew herself, and stood admiring at her own change: she saw the thronged temples of the heathens unfrequented, the adored gods derided, the celebrated oracles ceased, the wise philosophers puzzled, the enraged magistrates disheartened by the unsuccessfulness of their own cruelties, and all this done by a few despicable and illiterate fishermen. And yet all this had not been so strange, had it won men only to an opinion or a faction: for such chaff will soonest catch small birds, a giddy and a hair-brained multitude: but the wonder of it was, that Christianity converted men from folly and vice to a sublime pitch of virtue and substantial goodness; and of vicious, debauched, and dissolute, made them sober and temperate and righteous; which is so clear an evidence of that extraordinary power and efficacy that accompanied it, that the heathens attributed its successes to the power of magic, as St. Austin hath observed, concluding that it was impossible for it to conquer through so many difficulties without the assistance of some mighty and powerful spirit: and though it doth not now convert men so miraculously as it did at first, but proceedeth in more rational and human methods, by joining in with our understandings, and leading us forward by reason and sobriety, by instructing our faculties in the right perception

of things, and by discovering a fuller evidence and stronger connection of truths; so that whatsoever assistance it now affordeth us, it worketh in the same way and after the same manner as if they were all performed by the strength of our own reason; yet still there are mighty assistances accompanying all its ministrations, and it is enlivened with a divine power and efficacy: for still those promises are in force, *To him that hath shall be given;* and, *He will give his Spirit to every one that asketh:* so that God's grace is wanting to none, but to those that are wanting to themselves: for if we will be so ingenuous as to do what we can, God will be so gracious as to help us to do what we cannot. If therefore we do not do all, it is our own fault, since we may do all through Christ, who will strengthen us, if we do what we can. What therefore may we not do, who are thus armed with divine assistance? What sins are there so strong that we may not mortify? What passions so violent that we may not tame? What habits so inveterate that we may not vanquish, who are thus backed and aided with auxiliaries from above? And thus you see what impenetrable armour the Christian religion is against all the darts and weapons of sin, and how able it is to render us shot-proof and invulnerable against all its temptations.

I come now to the second thing proposed, which is to shew you that Christianity is armour of proof against the evil of misery, that is, against all those cares and fears, those griefs and sorrows, vexations and anxieties, wherewith we are here encompassed on every side: and indeed there is nothing in the world can give so much ease unto the minds of men,

and fortify them so impregnably against the miseries of the world, as true religion. Hence is that of our Saviour, *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you*, Matth. xi. 28. that is, All you that are tired out with the crosses and troubles of this miserable world, do but become my disciples, believe my doctrine, and obey my commands, and I will give ease and refreshment to your minds. And in the following verse he telleth us, that by taking his yoke, that is, his religion upon us, we shall find rest for our souls: and of necessity his yoke must mightily contribute to the arming of souls against the troubles of the world upon these following accounts.

1. First, In that it naturally inspireth us with true courage and magnanimity. There is nothing in the world so valiant and heroic as a true Christian spirit: for its courage is composed of the best metal in the world, of patience and temperance, of constancy and resignation to the will of God; all which mingled together do beget in the soul an invincible firmness and staidness of mind against all dangerous and dolorous accidents whatsoever. For what accident can daunt a soul that is weaned by temperance from the pleasures of the body, and hardened by patience against the pain and displeasures of it; that hath so subdued her passions, as to be always present to herself, and constant to her own reason; and having resigned up all to the conduct of divine providence, receiveth every accident as a token of love, and giveth a hearty welcome to whatsoever befalleth her? Such a soul as this standeth firm as a rock, outbraving all the storms of fortune, making its envious waves retire in empty foam and insignificant

passion. But wheresoever these brave qualities are wanting, it is impossible a man should be truly courageous: for intemperance, impatience, and diffidence will let in every trouble that assaults us, to spoil and ravage us at pleasure, and expose all the peace and tranquillity of our minds to the mercy of every trifle; so that we shall not be able to abide the shock of any cross accident that encountereth us, but, like cowardly poltrons, shall lie down vanquished at the feet of every trouble that befalleth us. And there is no greater sign of cowardice and weakness of spirit, than an aptness to be discomposed with trifles: for as sick persons are offended at the light of the sun and the freshness of the air, which administer pleasure and recreation to those that are in health, even so persons of weak and pusillanimous spirits are easily offended; their minds are so tender and effeminate, that they cannot bear the least air of trouble without disturbance; and what would be a diversion to a courageous soul grieveth and incommodeth them. But when we are once arrived to a due pitch of patience, temperance, and confidence in God, all the troubles of the world will be but like fleabites to a sleeping lion; and we shall no more be concerned with these little crosses and mischances, than the moon is with the yelping of those whiffling curs that bark at her from below. For true Christian courage is the most heroic of all other: for courage is merely brutal, consisting in heats and ferments of the blood and spirits, in which gamecocks and mastives outvie the greatest heroes in the world. But the courage of a Christian is truly rational and manly, founded in religion and true principles of reason, and so is a thousand times more

manageable and useful, than that which ariseth only out of temper and complexion: for this sort of courage is headstrong and unruly, and, like an hot-mettled horse, doth oftentimes run away with the rider, and instead of securing us from, carries us headlong into mischief: but true Christian courage is gentle and obsequious to the commands of reason, and upon that account is far more useful in our extremities, and is more applicable to our necessities. Since therefore Christianity inspireth us with such an excellent courage as this, it cannot but render us invincible, and effectually shield us against all the blows of fortune.

Secondly, It armeth us against the miseries of the world, by reconciling us unto God. It is impossible a man should be free from trouble and anxiety of mind whilst he is in a state of enmity with God: for there is grafted within our very natures such a natural awe and dread of a divine power, as doth necessarily alarm all that fear and horror that is within us, whensoever we knowingly provoke that power we so much dread and tremble at; and our conscience being thus in a tumult and uproar will give a sting to all our miseries, and render all our dangers more terrible and amazing; it will represent every cross accident to us as a messenger of God's vengeance, and every little danger as an approaching storm from heaven: and then how must every danger affright, and every misery oppress us, that comes with a commission from that Almighty vengeance which we so naturally dread and tremble at! How can we but sink, even under our crosses, when we think what a load of wrath there is in them! How can we but quake at our dangers, when

we look upon them as so many thunderbolts, which omnipotent fury is hurling at our head! The thought of this will imbitter all our miseries, and make the most trifling dangers to look stern and terrible. Hence is that of the Wise Man, *The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion.* For though no man pursueth them, yet their own consciences, like restless furies, haunt them whither ever they go; and this makes them flee before a shadow, and when none pursueth them they run away from themselves. Thus whilst we are in hostility against God, we lie open to all weathers, and our own consciences do betray us to the fury of all those troubles and dangers that surround us. But the great end of Christian religion is to reconcile us unto God: in order to which, it both proposeth a peace to us, and the terms and articles upon which it is to be obtained; which terms when we have performed, the quarrel presently endeth in a mutual confederacy; and of enemies, we become the friends and favourites of God: upon which there followeth a jubilee of joy and peace within; the conscience smileth and groweth calm as the ocean when the wind is laid: and now, if troubles befall us, if dangers encounter us, it is all but like the rattling of hail upon the tiles of a music-house, which with all their clattering and noise will not be able to disturb the harmony within. For a quiet conscience will be a paradise in a wilderness, a haven in the midst of storms; it will make a man fearless in danger, joyful in tribulation, and enable him to sing with a thorn at his breast; and when troubles and crosses surround him on every side, that will be a sanctuary to him whereunto he may retire, and be

merry in spite of fortune. Thus, by reconciling us unto God, the Christian religion armeth us against all the miseries in the world.

Thirdly, It doth it also by assuring us of that special care and regard which the divine providence hath of us and our affairs. Christianity assureth us, *that all things shall work together for the good of them that love God and keep his commandments;* that even their afflictions shall prosper them, and all the cross winds conspire to blow them to the right port: and what greater security can a man desire, than to have all his affairs managed by a providence that is infinitely wise, and knoweth what is best for us; infinitely kind, and willeth what he knoweth best; and infinitely powerful, and doth what it willeth? This is the utmost that any modest or reasonable man can desire for his security; and he that firmly believeth this must necessarily be happy, whatsoever befalleth him: for whatsoever happeneth he taketh as a favour, because it cometh from the hand of that wise and merciful providence, which he is well assured doth both know and do that which is best for him. And is it not a thousand times better that our affairs should be managed as God thinketh fit, who is so much wiser than we, and loveth us far better than we do ourselves, than that they should always jump with our childish hopes, and keep pace with our extravagant fancies? And if the government of all events that befall us were put into our own hands, would it not be our wisdom and our interest to resign it back into God's hands again, who, as we must needs acknowledge, can carve a thousand times better for us than we for ourselves? Why then should we be troubled that

our affairs sometimes run counter to our humours and fancies? Did we understand the reason of God's dealings, and see what he seeth, and know what he knoweth, we should praise him on our bended knees for those crosses which are now the innocent causes of our repinings against him. This therefore in reason ought to satisfy us, that we are under the protection of a most wise and gracious Providence; and that if afflictions do befall us, they are but rods in the hands of our Benefactor, and tokens of love from a reconciled Father. For what reason can we have either to fear or complain, when we know ourselves sheltered within the bosom of that Providence, in which all the divine attributes, like so many guardian angels, do pitch their tents about us. Within this blessed ark, if we please, we may live securely, whilst all the floods of misery do swell and rove about us; here we may sing *requiems* in the loudest thunders, and sleep securely in the midst of storms: for what should we be afraid of, when we have Omniscience for our pilot, Omnipotence for our convoy, and all-sufficient Goodness for our purveyor and caterer? By the help of this one consideration a man may bid defiance to misery, and stand impregnable against all the batteries of the world.

Fourthly and lastly, Christianity armeth us against the evil of misery, by assuring us of a blessed immortality: and verily, were it not for the hope of this, man were of all creatures the most miserable. For his very reason, by which he is capable of a larger happiness, doth most commonly in this life prove an instrument of grief and vexation to him. And as for the beasts, they are as sensible of sensual pleasures as we; they relish their morsels with as great

a gust, and enjoy their delights with as quick a sense, as the greatest epicures in the world. Besides which, their harmony is not mingled with the sad discords of a wounded conscience, which often interrupts our mirth, and puts a sting to all our pleasures: and as for troubles, the beasts only feel them whilst they are present, and are not alarmed with fear at the approach of them, nor vexed with despair in the presence of them, nor wracked with fruitless cares of removing them; to all which inconveniencies our reason exposeth us. So that were it not for the hope of a future happiness, man, that is the top of this lower creation, would be the most miserable part of it; and we should have reason to envy the happiness of the pretty birds, that sit merrily singing on the trees; and to wish that we could change conditions with the fishes, that sport and play in the silver streams, devoid of all those griefs and sorrows, cares and anxieties, with which we are wracked and tortured every moment. The only thing therefore that maketh our life desirable, and giveth it the advantage of nonentity, is this, that how mean soever our condition is here, yet we are born to higher hopes, and are now but candidates for an immortal preferment: and of this the Christian religion giveth us the most certain assurance, even by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. By this it is that we are begotten into a lively hope of an eternal inheritance, as the apostle tells us, 1 Peter i. 3. And indeed this is a proof of the immortal state beyond all other arguments, whether moral or physical: for had not this doctrine of immortality been true, it cannot be imagined that the God of truth would have sealed and confirmed it, as he did, by raising the author of

it from the dead; since in so doing he must have been guilty of cheating the world, and seconding the most rank imposture; than which we cannot form a conceit more black, or incongruous to the nature of God. Wherefore now life and immortality are as clear and evident as the resurrection of Christ from the dead, of which we have as full assurance as we can possibly have of any matter of fact in the world: for the eyewitnesses of it confirmed their testimony with their blood, which is the highest pledge that a man can give of his honesty; and there is no credit to be given to men, if they may not be believed upon this security. Thus Christianity, you see, hath founded our hopes of immortal happiness upon the surest foundations in the world; which hope is sufficient to raise any considering man above the reach of misery. For would we but keep our thoughts within those higher and untroubled regions, we should be able to look down upon these little affairs, about which poor mortals scramble, with as much contempt and scorn as we do upon the toils and labours of a little world of ants about a molehill; who are not altogether so ridiculous, because they do not divide their molehill into little empires, nor defraud and murder, nor be false and treacherous to one another, for the greater share; nor were they ever so extravagant as to march out in armies to kill their neighbouring ants, so to extend their dominion over the next handful of a turf. But he whose hope hath mounted him to heaven, can from thence look down and sigh, and smile at all these fooleries, and slight and undervalue whatsoever sensual men, poor souls, do fear, or hope, or long for, or pursue: for he hath such a glory within the prospect of his faith and

hope, as doth at one glimpse foil all the glory of the world, and unsting all its miseries. The sight of that flowery Canaan of rest and pleasure that lieth before him, encourageth him to march on with joy and alacrity through this howling desert of sorrow and misery, and maketh the wilderness to seem a paradise to him; and at worst, all the ill usage that he meets with here will but make earth more loathsome now, and heaven more welcome to him hereafter. When therefore he is tossed in this tempestuous sea, he considereth with himself, that a few leagues farther lieth that blessed port, where he shall be crowned as soon as he is landed; and concludes, that when he is gotten safe on shore, he shall then look back with pleasure and delight upon those threatening waves he now encountereth, and for ever bless the storms and winds that drave him thither; and so resolveth with St. Paul, *that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the joys that shall be revealed*, Rom. viii. 18. And thus you see what incomparable armour the Christian religion is, both against sin and misery. But yet we must not think it will defend us, if we only keep it by us to look on. There never was any soldier so foolish, as to think himself secure in a battle, because he hath excellent armour at home, locked up in his chest or closet; and yet so besotted are many men, as to expect defence and security from their religion, because they are baptized Christians, and have a scheme of Christianity in their Bibles: as if religion were nothing but a charm or amulet, which being hung about their necks must immediately disenchant them of all their maladies. But be not mistaken; if ever you mean this armour of God should do you good,

you must put it on, you must transcribe its doctrines into your belief, and its duties into your practice; which is the second thing I proposed to discourse of, that if we would have Christianity armour of defence unto us, we must put it on, that is, we must believe and obey it: for unless we believe the doctrines of Christianity, how can they defend us either from sin or misery? for our holy religion doth not work magically upon men, nor make them invulnerable, as the witch did Achilles, merely by charms and enchantments; but it proceeds by rational and accountable methods, and fortifieth our minds by reason and arguments. But no proposals of reason can work upon the minds of men that do not believe them: and though the things proposed be never so true in themselves, yet unless we assent to the truth of them, we shall be no more concerned in them, than if they were the grossest fictions. For no man will be moved by those things in which he thinketh he hath no interest: but in pure falsehoods we can have none; because they are pure nonentities. To what purpose therefore is it that Christianity hath armed us against sin with the strongest motives in the world, if we do not believe them? All the glories it proposeth will signify no more to us, than the promise of a fair inheritance in Utopia; and we shall be no more concerned in all the terrors it denounceth, than if we were only threatened with an invasion from the world in the moon: and what though Christianity fortifies us against misery with arguments strong enough to create comfort in hell; yet if we give no credit to them, they will be as far from comforting us as the festival dreams of a starving man are from satisfying his hunger. If therefore we intend that religion should secure us, either

from sin or misery, we must embrace its proposals with a hearty and lively faith; and as we must believe it, so we must practise it; else it will be as insignificant to us as the dreams of the Alcoran. For the way of Christian religion is, not to hale and drag men out of the arms of their lusts by force and irresistible power; but by arguments to solicit them to the practice of those duties it enjoineth, and by that to wean them from their vicious inclination. For our religion walks in the methods of our nature, and carries us on by degrees from acts to habits of goodness. And in this method it is that the divine grace, which accompanies Christianity, doth work its effects upon the spirits of men, not by the instantaneous infusion of virtuous habits into their wills, but by making effectual addresses to their reason and consciences, to persuade them to thwart their vicious inclinations, by practising those virtues that are contrary to them: and so it goeth on, moving us to a continued repetition of those virtuous acts, until all our evil habits are gone out, and expired into the contrary habits of virtue and goodness. For the grace of God is like a graft put into a stock of another nature; it makes use of the faculties and juice of the stock, but by degrees converts all into its own nature: and therefore we usually see, that when a man hath been wicked, the beginnings of his reformation proceed not from habit and inclination, but from fear and terror; and whilst he doth obey God, he would rebel, if he dared; but persevering in his obedience, he groweth more habituated to it, and so by degrees it becomes his nature.' This therefore being the ordinary method of Christianity, to carry us on by repeated acts to permanent habits of virtue, our

obedience to its commands is indispensably necessary, if we expect it should either rescue or secure us from sin: for no man is secure from sin, until he is habitually virtuous; which state, without a miracle, no man can arrive to, but through intermediate acts of obedience. And as without the practice of its duties, Christianity cannot arm us against sin, so neither can it against misery: for all those gracious promises and comfortable proposals, by which our religion arms us against the misery of this world, are suspended upon the condition of our obedience to its laws; and whilst this is wanting, there is not one word of comfort for us in all the glad tidings of the gospel; there is no promise in it will open a door of hope to shelter us from the storms of trouble; but all its dreadful threats will be perpetually thundering out their terrors upon us: so that if we are resolved to be wicked, we can never expect comfort from Christianity: for it hath set up a flaming sword to chase all wickedness out of the paradise of its joys. So that we may as soon suck balsam out of a scorpion's sting, or gather nectar from a nest of wasps, as joy or comfort from the Christian religion, whilst we persevere in our wickedness. Thus you see how necessary it is, that we should believe the doctrines and practise the duties of Christianity, if ever we mean that it should arm and defend us. To close up all therefore, as you hope to be the better for your religion, to be defended by it either from sin or misery, do not content yourselves any longer either with the empty name of Christians or the formal profession of Christianity, but endeavour seriously to work your minds into such an effectual belief of it, as may throughly mould you into an

hearty compliance with its duties. For which end let me persuade you to shake off all that prejudice against religion which lewd and vicious principles may have infused into your understandings, and to consider seriously with yourselves whether it be not a thousand times more for your interest that religion should be no imposture, than that you should enjoy your lusts; and whether all those comforts that religion administers in this life, and all those hopes it giveth of a glorious immortality in the life to come, be not infinitely more valuable than the short and fulsome pleasure of a few paltry vices: and sure, if you are wise, when you have throughly considered this, you will heartily wish that Christianity were true, though you should not be able to believe it so. But if when you have quitted all your prejudice, you will but impartially survey those many and mighty evidences upon which this excellent religion is founded, you will soon find all that infidelity which now hovers over your understandings vanish and fly away like shadows before the sun; and your minds being once persuaded into an hearty belief of its truth and divinity, you cannot imagine what force you will find in all its motives and arguments. Then will its promises tempt you a thousand times more than all the lures and blandishments of vice; and its threats will overpower you with such an awful dread, that nothing in the world will be so terrible as sin; and you will find more life in one word of religion, than in all the address and rhetoric of vice: then you will no longer complain of the difficulties of religion, nor be startled at the steep ascents in the way to heaven; for your faith will every moment supply you with new strength

and vigour to carry you through all the weary stages of your duties: and having thus put on Christianity by faith and obedience, you will find yourselves instantly inspired by it with such an invincible courage, as will enable you to conquer all the malice, and triumph over all the miseries of the world. For now we shall be masters of our own fortunes, and we need no longer be tenants at will to the chances and accidents of the world, but have all our happiness in our own hands; and may choose whether we will be miserable: for whilst we keep peace with God and our own consciences, and do not through our own wilful folly forfeit the blessed hope of immortality, it is not all the power and malice in the world can threaten our ruin, or shake the foundation of our happiness: and therefore, as we would be happy both here and hereafter, let us *put on the whole armour of God*, and sincerely submit our faith to the doctrines, and our practice to the laws of Christianity. Then may we bid defiance to all misery, and march triumphantly through heaven to heaven, and pass through one paradise into another: and our religion having armed us against all the troubles of this life, shall in the end crown us with the joys of the life to come.

SERMON II.

PREACHED BEFORE

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR AND COURT OF ALDERMEN AT GUILD-HALL CHAPEL, NOVEMBER 5, 1673.

LUKE ix. 56.

For the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

IT is the glory of the Christian religion, that it hath conquered the world, and triumphed over all that opposed it, without any other weapon but its own victorious beauty and reasonableness. Had it been proclaimed by the mouths of cannon, or marched like Paracelsus his demon upon the pummel of his sword, it had been rivalled by sundry successful impostures, and the Alcoran itself would have compared victories with it: but in this it hath the preeminence of all the religions that ever were, that it achieved its conquest without scrip or sword, without the aid of worldly force or policy; that by its own native light it vanquished the ignorance and prejudice of the world, and by pure dint of reason subdued men's minds to its empire. For it was not by racks and tortures that it converted infidels and convinced heretics, but by reason and miracles; and till it began to be sophisticated with temporal interests and designs, it taught its followers only to endure, but not to inflict persecutions: for this was their language in the purer ages, *Non est religionis, cogere reli-*

gionem, quæ suscipi debet sponte, non vi, as Tertullian expresses it; "Religion presseth no man to "her service, and disdains to have any followers but "volunteers." But when once its followers began to bend it to their interest, and make it the solicitor of their temporal designs, and to break into parties, and embark their own reputation in the success of those disputable opinions that distinguished them; then, according as they had the luck to succeed in their disputes, and the favour of the emperors, they began to solicit and arm the temporal power against their adversaries: in which bad practice they imitated those whom in all other things they did condemn; namely, the Arians, the Circumcellians, and Donatists, who were the first Christians that either persuaded or practised persecution: and yet for a long while so abhorrent it was from the temper of Christians, that Ursatus and Ithrius, two otherwise catholic bishops, for persuading Maximus to destroy the Priscillianists, were branded by their brethren with an infamous character, and sharply reproved by the good bishop of Trevers; who plainly tells them, (Sulp. Sev. Hist. lib. p. 152.) *Satis, superque sufficere, ut episcopali sententia hæretico judicati ecclesiis pellerentur: novum est et inauditum nefas, ut causam ecclesiæ judex seculi judicaret:* "It is "sufficient that heretics be banished the church as "outlaws from the communion of Christians: but "it is a new and unheard-of wickedness, that a cause "of religion should be judged and punished at a se-"cular tribunal:" and yet this was above three hundred and seventy years after Christ. But as the church's fortunes grew worse, and some of her fathers worst of all; so persecution and tyranny pre-

vailed in Christendom, till at last it was baptized into the name of zeal, and enthroned among the graces of religion. For if we look into the history of the Roman church, we shall find persecution first preached from the infallible chair; the popes whereof growing great and proud, and impatient of contradiction, began first to murmur against the toleration of the Novatians; which being a great eyesore to those haughty prelates, as soon as they had gotten power into their hands, they rooted them out by force and violence; but yet they had not so far abandoned all their natural sense of mercy and goodness, as to proceed to bloodshed, till the divine right of fire and fagot was invented by St. Dominick, that rabid and furious incendiary, by whose instigation the Albigenses were wasted by a dreadful war, and one hundred and eighty of them burnt to death, because they would not abjure their religion: which horrid butchery was acted by the commission of pope Innocent the Third, (Antonin. pars v, tit. 19. cap. 1.) who to encourage it granted a plenary pardon and indulgence to the executioners. And now, like Libyan tigers, having tasted blood, they thirst insatiably for more; and instead of pastors, turn butchers to the flock of Christ, by their repeated cruelties converting that church into an infamous slaughterhouse of Christians; and for these six hundred years bleeding hath been the only remedy those spiritual mountebanks have prescribed to cure the diseased church; and this hath been cried up as their great catholicon. Witness the infinite slaughters they have acted and instigated in Italy, Bohemia, the upper and lower Germany: witness the Spanish inquisition, where the holy fathers confute heretics with racks and

gibbets: witness the Parisian massacre, where our religion was confuted only with skeans and daggers: witness the Marian days, wherein the Roman faith was defended so gloriously against all arguments with only that dreadful text, *Recant or burn*. And if all this be not enough, witness that horrid powder plot, the prevention of which we now commemorate; a villainy so foul and monstrous, as was never paralleled either in fiction or history; and compared with which, the most tragic scenes of melancholy poets, and dismal phantasms of despairing souls, are but all comic tales, subjects of sport and laughter: a tragedy so deep and bloody, that certainly had the most barbarous cannibal in America been hired to act it, the very thought of it must have startled him into an agony; and he could not but have relented, considering thus with himself: I am now giving fire to a train, which at one blow will ruin a whole kingdom; tear in pieces its king and princes, and scatter their members in the air; strew its fields with the limbs and quarters of its slaughtered nobles and gentry; fill its streets with the threnes and lamentations of woful mothers, the shrieks and outcries of desolate wives and children; shake its goodly temples and royal palaces into ruins, and in one moment lay all its glory in the dust. And yet, *O tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon!* all these cruelties were designed under the livery of the most merciful Jesus, and this cannibals' feast of fellow-Christians' blood prepared to entertain the Father of mercies and the Prince of love; as if they, like the heathen demons, fed their hungry nostrils with the nidorous reeks and steams of human sacrifices. Thus by de-

grees, you see, persecution is embodied into the Romish religion; and when heresy is the disease, ruin is the only remedy. A sure one indeed; but O how heavenly wide of those mild prescriptions of the great Physician of souls! who being urged by his own disciples to revenge himself upon a company of rude and obstinate schismatics, solemnly professes, that he *came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* The occasion of which words was an affront which the Samaritans had offered to our blessed Saviour; who being notorious enemies to the Jews that worshipped at Jerusalem, refused to entertain our Saviour for one night, perceiving he was a Jew, and so of a contrary religion to themselves: upon which James and John, moved with great indignation to see their blessed Master so unworthily treated, request him, that, after the example of Elias, they might call for fire from heaven to destroy them: but he no way approving their motion, severely rebukes them for it; and plainly tells them, that they knew not what spirit they were of. As much as if he should have said, If you will needs imitate that legal zealotick spirit Elias acted by, whatever you pretend, you act not like my disciples, whose spirit and genius ought to be more tender and merciful; and therefore, though these Samaritans are of a different sect and religion, and will not embrace me nor my doctrine, yet far be it from me to destroy them: for this is quite contrary both to my temper and the design of my coming; which is not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. So that you see the plain scope of the words is this; that to destroy men's lives upon the score of religion is a practice contrary to the spirit of Christ and the design of his religion.

Before I proceed to the proof of this proposition, I shall briefly endeavour to state and restrain it within its just bounds and limits; and they are these four.

First, That it is not to be understood of any religion that is in its own nature wicked and immoral: for if a man's religion teacheth vice, or directly patroniseth it, his vice is not the less punishable because his religion prompted him to it. Indeed, if he keep his wicked opinion to himself, it cannot be punished, because it cannot be known: but if he persuades others to it, or practises it himself, it becomes matter of fact, and is as punishable as the crime is it persuades to. For the great rules of virtue and good life are so clear and perspicuous, that a man cannot be ignorant of them without being faulty: and therefore if a man embrace a wicked opinion, and act or spread it, the matter of fact is justly punishable according to the proportion of its malignity. And indeed if wicked actions were to be excused upon the score of conscience or opinion, religion would be made a sanctuary for all the villainies in the world: and there is no crime so monstrous, but would make a shift to shelter itself from punishment under the protection of conscience.

Secondly, and more particularly, That the proposition is not to be understood of such opinions as, either directly or in their immediate consequents, undermine the foundations of government: for government being indispensably necessary to the well-being of the world, men ought to know, that that can be no good religion which teaches doctrines whose consequents destroy it; and therefore it is just and reasonable it should be rooted out as a dangerous pest and nuisance to the public interest; and the neces-

sity of the thing will justify the lawfulness of it: for were princes bound to tolerate ungovernable principles, they must be kings no longer than they can get leave to reign from the humour or conscience of each hotbrained opinionist; and all their authority must be dependent upon the little *capricios* of every peevish zealot; the consequents of which must be the dissolution of government, and that an inlet to all disorder and confusion. And therefore those that, under a pretence of religion, propagate such principles, are justly accountable for all the consequent inconveniencies, and punishable accordingly.

Thirdly, That the proposition is not to be understood of our practice, but of our judgments and opinions: for every man hath a natural right, as he is a rational creature, to judge for himself; and to punish any one for so doing is the greatest tyranny in the world, it being an exercise of dominion over the minds of men, which are subject only to the empire of God: but as for our practice, that is liable to the restraint of human laws; and that as well in sacred as in civil affairs. They cannot indeed oblige us to what God hath forbidden us; because his being the supreme authority ought to take place against all the countermands of any inferior power whatsoever: but then there are a world of things which remain in a state of indifferency, and are left undetermined both by the natural and positive laws of God: and these are all liable to the commands and determinations of human authority, and are the proper matter of civil and ecclesiastical laws; to the extent of whose jurisdiction there can be no other restraint, than only the countermand of a superior authority: and therefore if there be nothing antecedently evil enjoined by

the laws, whether civil or ecclesiastical, we are bound to obey them; and if we do not, we are justly punishable for our disobedience. Indeed, if we believe the thing enjoined to be evil, though it be not, we ought not to do it, in obedience to the supreme authority of God, which we believe hath forbidden it: but yet if we mistake, and the thing be not evil, but in its own nature indifferent, we are justly punishable for the not doing it, because our mistake alters not the nature of the thing: if it be indifferent, it is a proper object of human laws, whether we think it so or no, and as such may be justly imposed; and the imposition being just, our not obeying it must needs be justly punishable. In this extremity therefore we have no other redress, but to seek information, and get our mistaken consciences better instructed. And if, when we have done all, we cannot alter our opinion, our meek and patient submission to the penalty will be our excuse before the tribunal of God.

Fourthly, and lastly, That the proposition is not to be understood of our making a public profession of our opinions, so as to disturb the peace of the church with them. So long as men are humble and modest in their dissent, and do not go about to advance their opinions into factions, and to divide and rend the church in the propagation of them, I see no reason why these should be punished and persecuted for them. But if men openly profess their dissent to the prejudice of the public peace and interest, and dote so much upon their own conceits as to fancy them necessary for all the rest of mankind, and consequently go about to vex their neighbours, provoke their rulers, and unsettle the government for the propagation of them; if through an inconsiderate

zeal for their own notions, they should be active and industrious to make a party against the church, and withdraw others from her communion, they are offenders to the public peace, and as such are liable to punishment: for they ought to consider, that unless their opinion be of greater moment than the church's peace, it ought to vail, and give way to it; and that there are no opinions weighty enough to balance the church's peace, whose contraries do not undermine Christianity itself, and utterly defeat the ends of Christian society. For every man is obliged, by virtue of being in society, to do his utmost to preserve the honour and interest of it, and to join in all acts of it so far as they tend thereunto; and dissent from every thing which tends to the apparent ruin of that society. Now the main end of Christian society being the honour of God and the salvation of souls, the primary reason of men's entering into churches, or Christian societies, is to advance these ends, and to join in all acts of the society they are listed into, so far as they tend to the advancement of them: but if any thing be required of us directly repugnant to these ends, we are bound to manifest and declare our dissent from them; and if for so doing we are cast out of the particular Christian society, by so doing and suffering we preserve our communion with the catholic society of Christians: but if I am never so much persuaded, that such a practice or article of the church is an error, yet, if it be not such an error as doth defeat the great ends of Christian society, I am bound, either to keep my persuasion to myself, or at least not to disturb the peace of the church in my endeavours to propagate it to others; because, next to the honour of God and the salvation of souls,

the church's peace is to be valued above all things whatsoever, and therefore is not to be disturbed for the sake of every little error and trifling opinion: it is sufficient that we are allowed the liberty of opining, and are not deprived of our natural right of judging for ourselves: and we ought not to complain, though we should be restrained by laws and penalties from making parties against the church, and propagating our little opinions into factions; since if we will not restrain ourselves without such restriction, it is impossible there should be any peace among Christian societies; every hotbrained opinionist will be making a party for himself; and every differing opinion will grow into a sect; and so there will be continual dividing and subdividing, till the Christian world be crumbled into as many churches as there are opinions, and as many opinions as there are men. For whilst every one is zealously propagating his little opinion, no man will let his brother be quiet: this man will be ready to burst, till he hath vented himself; and the other will be as impatient, till he hath contradicted what he hath said: and whilst both are thus zealous to proselyte each other, neither will be content with a single conquest; but the public must be disturbed, and, by the zeal of the contending parties, rent into infinite sects and divisions. So that you see it is indispensably necessary, that there should be some restraint, though not upon men's opinions, yet upon their public profession of them; since without it the church will be inevitably exposed to perpetual tumults and disturbances.

Having thus stated and bounded the proposition, you see the plain meaning of it is this, That it is

contrary to the spirit of Christ and the genius of Christianity, to destroy or persecute men for mere opinions or errors in religion. That it is so, I shall endeavour to prove from these following instances.

I. It is contrary to that tenderness and compassion which Christianity requireth of us: for our religion enjoins us to sympathise with the miserable, and not to add afflictions to the afflicted; and therefore fallibility being the natural imperfection and unhappiness of human understandings, the errors of them should rather be the subject of our pity than our revenge: for it is as much out of our power not to err, as not to be sick, or die; and we may as reasonably punish a man for not being immortal, as for not being infallible. For the seeds of fallibility are sown in the nature of our understandings, as well as those of mortality in the temper of our bodies: and we can no more avoid being mistaken in all instances, than we can prevent the consumption of our radical moisture. All we can do is, to endeavour not to err; to stand fast as we can in the centre of truth: but if when we have done so, we should reel on either hand towards the circumference of error, we have done our duty, and were not bound not to be mistaken. For no obligation can reach a man's conscience, if it be impossible: we cannot be bound to do more than our best, to have the understanding of an angel, or to be infallible; for these are things that are not within the sphere of our choice, and therefore are no matters of law, or subjects of rewards and punishments. It is true, error is many times occasioned by a corrupt bias in the will; and men's understandings are frequently misled by their lusts; and then indeed the error hath a guilt derived

to it from that evil principle to which it owes its original. But if we see men honest in their lives, we are bound to think them so in their errors too: and if their errors be only innocent mistakes, what an inhumanity is it to persecute them for that which is their misery only, and not their sin! Who but a barbarian would cut a man's throat for being poor, or blind, or lame? And is it not altogether as barbarous and cruel, to destroy a man for that which is the poverty, and blindness, and lameness of his understanding? What is this, but to lay load upon load, to trample upon the prostrate, and heap miseries upon the miserable! Suppose that a different education, different books and company, have cast thy brother's understanding into a different figure from thine; is it reasonable that therefore thou shouldest persecute and destroy him? Or rather, is it not as unreasonable, as if thou shouldest cut off his head because he hath a dimple upon his chin, or a mole on his cheeks, or some line in his face that renders him unlike thee? Suppose he hath ill luck to believe some proposition, which to you and me seems wild, absurd, and unreasonable; must we presently beat out his opinion with his brains, because the poor soul was so unfortunate as to be misled by education, and imposed upon by authority and custom, which, we see, do so often cheat the honestest minds; and, like a mighty whirlpool, having once sucked a man in, do keep his head under water, and make it almost impossible for him to emerge, or recover himself? How can such a piece of cruelty, do ye think, consist with the tenderness and compassion which our religion enjoins!

II. It is destructive of the union and harmony

among Christians, which the Christian religion requires: for certainly the design of Christianity is not to reconcile men's notions, or to beget in the world an universal harmony in systems of orthodox opinions; which considering the frame of human nature, the infinite variety of men's ages and complexions, and the different sizes of our understandings, would be, I doubt, as vain a project, as to attempt to build a castle in the air. Nor indeed is it necessary that men should be all of one opinion, any more than that all should be of one humour and temper: for as in these divine providence hath made a great diversity, in which there is both beauty and convenience; so perhaps for the same reason it hath contrived variety of opinions, in which if there were an universal harmony, mankind would be at a loss for subjects of discourse, and so be deprived of a great part of the pleasures of conversation. The union therefore which our religion doth so studiously design and zealously promote, is that of hearts and affections; and this, I doubt not, might well enough consist with different opinions, were they but managed with that humility, modesty, and charity which becomes Christians. Were we but so modest, as to propose our opinions calmly, or to keep them to ourselves; so humble, as not to overvalue our own notions, and fancy them necessary for all the rest of mankind; so charitable, as to allow our brethren a liberty of opining, and not to damn and persecute them, because their brains are of a different figure from ours; I cannot imagine, why different opinions should more disturb the church, than difference in faces: for such a demeanour one towards another would infallibly keep our charity alive; which, when

all is done, is the strongest ligament of Christian society, and the surest band of the communion of saints: for this will twine and clasp our souls together, and tie us one to another by the heartstrings: but the destroying men's lives upon the score of their opinions is the most effectual way in the world to supplant charity. For how is it possible, considering the passions of human nature, that the persecuted party should love their persecutors, whom they see armed with fire and fagot to destroy them? And when once they hate them, (as they will soon do when they cease to love them,) their passion will immediately provoke their reason to damn and censure them; which is the only means that persecuted people have to stay the stomach of their hungry vengeance, till they have power and opportunity to glut it in the blood of their persecutors. And if in the revolution of things, the persecuted should get above their persecutors, what can be expected, but that, to preserve themselves, they will destroy them from whom they can expect nothing but destruction, should another revolution mount them uppermost again? And so Christendom will be made a cockpit of cruelties; and as often as men's understandings are deceived and abused, so often there will be new executions and massacres; which must therefore needs be the more cruel and unmerciful, because they are so consecrated with a pretence of religion. For when religion, which should be the antidote of our cruelty, proves its greatest incentive, it must needs run on the faster into mischief, by how much that which stopped its course before drives it on with the greater violence. So that by persecuting men upon the score of opinion, we do what in us

lies to banish charity out of the world; and, in the room of that love and union which our religion enjoins, to introduce nothing but rage, revenge, and cruelty, and to make Christendom more barbarous than America.

III. It is contrary to that method which Christianity prescribes us for the convincing deceived and erroneous persons; for the only remedy our holy religion prescribes for the cure of error is charity and forbearance, piety and reason: for the sense and spirit of Christianity is described in these excellent words of St. Paul, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. *The servants of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men;—in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth.* So that unless we can torture men without striving with them, and meekly instruct them by cutting their throats, it is evident by the text, we must either not persecute men, or quit the title of being the servants of God. So also the same apostle in Gal. vi. 1. *Brethren, if any man be overtaken in an error, ye that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.* And sure there is some difference between destroying and restoring a man, between the halter and the spirit of meekness. It is true indeed, the procedure of the gospel was more severe and rigorous against wicked and obstinate heretics; but then it was not for their opinions barely, but for the wickedness of their opinions, and obstinate perseverance in them, to the disturbance of the church's peace; both which, I have shewed you, are excepted cases. But yet, as the gospel was a great deal tenderer of making heretics than the

church of Rome is, so was it also a great deal gentler in the punishing them: for its utmost severity against them was excommunication, which at the worst did not destroy men's souls, but only consigned them to that sad portion they had deserved, and should have received independently from the church's censure: but the primary design of it was to scare them into a sober mind; which, if obtained, it proceeded no further: so that in its own nature it was medicinal; and though it was a distasteful and uneasy potion, by reason it gave the Devil possession of their bodies, to torture and afflict them; yet in itself it was wholesome and restorative, and did no man hurt, unless he would himself: but if he would be obstinate in his wickedness, notwithstanding he felt the woful effects of it, he might thank himself for all that followed; it being his own obstinacy that actuated the judgment, and gave a sting to it. But to destroy a man's life is as strange a way to cure him of his errors, as cutting off his head is to cure him of the toothach: for the only way to reduce him is to persuade his understanding, which we shall hardly do by beating out his brains. It is true indeed, corporal punishments may make a man dissemble his opinion, and profess contrary to his conscience and judgment; but they have no more virtue in them to inform his conscience or rectify his judgment, than syllogisms or demonstrations have to cure him of the stone or strangury; and therefore whatever he may pretend, he cannot think his opinion truer or falser, because you threaten to wrack and torture him for it; for such premises can infer no conclusion, but only that of his life. So whilst you attempt by such rough arguments to force him into your

opinion, you may perhaps vanquish his courage, but you will never alter his judgment; and if you make him a hypocrite, and terrify him into a profession of what he doth not believe, instead of erecting a trophy to God, you shall but build a monument for the Devil. And as persecution is a bad remedy for errors, so it is a worse antidote against them: for if you consult ecclesiastical history, you will find, that fire and fagot hath made more heretics than it ever destroyed: witness the Priscillianists, who, as Sulpicius tells us, were so far from being suppressed by the death of Priscillian, that they were more confirmed by it, and grew much more numerous. And it is the complaint of one of the Italian inquisitors, that he had found, after forty years' experience, wherein they had destroyed above 100,000 heretics, (Ger. Busdrag. Epist. ad Card. Pisar.) they were so far from being suppressed or weakened, that they were much more strengthened and increased. For there is a popular pity that follows all persons in misery, which breeds likeness of affection, and that very often likeness in opinion; and so much the rather, because he that persecutes another for his opinion, gives the multitude reason to suspect, that that is the best argument he can urge against it. Whereas on the contrary, he that dies for his opinion, and seals it with his blood, confirms it with the most popular argument in the world: for although, as one says, laying a wager be an argument of confidence rather than of truth, yet when a man stakes his life and soul, it argues at least that he is resigned, and honest, and charitable, and noble; and this among weak people will more advance his opinion than reason and demonstration: so by persecuting of

error, we do what in us lies to canonize it; and by crowning of it with the glory of martyrdom, we take an effectual course to increase the number of its votaries.

IV. And lastly, It is contrary to that care and tender regard of truth which Christianity enjoins us: for in many instances there is so near a resemblance between truth and error, that our purblind reason can hardly distinguish between them; and therefore if error were left to the persecutions of such fallible creatures as we, truth would be exposed to inevitable danger: for if you set a blind man to weed your garden, you must expect that sometimes he will pull up flowers instead of weeds. And if we that are so prone to err should be authorized to root up error, it would be impossible but we should sometimes mistake, and root up truth instead of error: and therefore our Saviour, considering this, hath reserved that power in his own hands, as you may see at large in Matth. xiii. 24, &c. *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that soweth good seed in his field; and while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among his wheat, and went away.* Upon which this man's servants ask him, in the 28th verse, if they should go and gather up the tares? To which he answers him, *Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.* By the field here, all men agree, we are to understand the church; and by the seed sown in it, that of the pure and sound doctrines of religion: so that all the difficulty of the parable lies in understanding what is meant by the tares, and what by the not gathering

the tares. By the tares must be meant, either persons of wicked lives or of false and evil opinions; and by the not gathering these tares must be understood, either the not cutting them off by the temporal sword, or the not excommunicating and cutting them off by the spiritual sword. But by the tares cannot be meant persons of wicked lives; for then the text would forbid the punishment of evil-doers. By not gathering the tares cannot be meant the not cutting them off by the spiritual sword; for then the text would forbid the church to excommunicate either wicked livers or obstinate heretics. And therefore of necessity by the tares must be meant persons of evil opinions; and by the not gathering them, the not destroying them by the temporal sword. And this interpretation is very much favoured by the reason that is given of the prohibition, *lest ye also root up the wheat with them:* as if he should have said, As for external wickednesses, I freely leave them to the lash of human judicatures; the rectitude or obliquity of them being far more discernible than of inward speculations and opinions: but I will by no means trust you with the punishment of errors, lest, through interest, passion, or mistake, you should exterminate the truth with it: for you being so fallible and apt to err, it is impossible but sometimes you must miss the mark, mistake the wheat for tares, and hit the truth, though you aim at error. Having thus shewed you how contrary it is to the spirit and genius of Christianity to destroy men's lives upon the score of mere opinion, or religion, I shall now conclude what I have said with one inference from the whole.

Use. From hence I infer the Antichristian ty-

ranny of the church of Rome, who hath fleshed herself with so many slaughters, and dyed her garments so deep in the blood of Christians, upon no other score, but only their differing from her, in some (at least) disputable and harmless opinions; because upon her bare word they could not believe propositions which to them seemed contrary to sense, and reason, and scripture; and their faith had not stomach enough to digest the fulsome absurdities, and swallow the grossest contradictions. Blessed Jesu! that ever a church pretending to be thy spouse should be so forgetful of thy mercies, as to spill the blood of so many Christians, upon no other account, but because they could not believe her absolution such a philosopher's stone as to turn attrition into effectual repentance; and a few words of a priest such a powerful charm as to conjure a man to heaven in an instant; and because thou hast made holiness the sole condition of eternal life, durst not depend upon confraternities, stations, and privilege-altars, *Agnus Dei's*, little offices, amulets, and such like hallowed baubles; because they could not worship images, and pray to God and saints in the same form of words, and durst not run from scripture to uncertain traditions, and from ancient traditions unto new pretences; from reasonable services into blind devotions; from believing the necessity of inward acts of piety and devotion, into a dangerous temptation of resting upon the *opus operatum*, the mere numbering of so many beads, and saying of so many prayers! That ever Christians should be destroyed by Christians, for not believing all those monstrous absurdities which transubstantiation implies; that Christ's body may be in a thousand places

at the same time; that it may stay in a place while it is going from it; be both in and out of the same place in the same moment; that it may come from heaven to earth, and yet never stir out of heaven, nor be any where in the way between; that his whole body is in each crumb of each consecrated wafer; and that without being lessened, all its parts are crowded up into one single atom, and lie all within the compass of a pin's head, though it be four foot long; that though it be whole and entire in every crumb, and there be ten thousand of these crumbs in ten thousand distant places, yet doth it not multiply into ten thousand bodies, but still remains one and the same. Now what greater tyranny can there be, than to destroy and massacre men for not believing such a mass of palpable contradictions? And yet, for these and such like causes it is, that Rome hath so often washed her barbarous hands in protestant blood; embroiled the Christian world, and by the terror of her awful thunderbolts scared subjects into rebellion against their lawful sovereigns, and sovereigns into persecution of their natural subjects: of the truth of which I could give you a thousand foreign instances; but, in compliance with the time and occasion, I shall rather choose to confine myself at home. To destroy men's lives upon the score of religion was a practice never known in England, till the time of Henry the Fourth; who being an usurper, and so liable to many enemies, both foreign and domestic, sought to endear the pope to him, who was then moderator of Christendom, by sending him, as a token of his love and duty, the blood of his enemies. And for many years after, this was the yearly sacrifice our English monarchs were fain to offer up to

the Roman idol: and whensoever, through their own weakness, they feared, or were forced to flatter him, they had no other way to appease the angry demon, but by causing their children to pass through the fire to him, and glutting his thirsty vengeance with their blood. But when afterwards our English monarchs threw off the Roman yoke, and would no longer be the pope's leeches, he immediately issueth out his bulls and excommunications to alarm their subjects into a rebellion against them; for immediately upon queen Elizabeth's coming to the throne, pope Paul the Fourth refused to acknowledge her, pretending this crown to be a fee of the papacy, and that it was audaciously done of her to assume it without his leave; and because she would not turn out immediately, when her great landlord had given her such fair warning, pope Pius the Fifth takes out a writ of ejectment, issueth out his bull, and deposeth her; in which he thus expresseth himself, *Volumus et jubemus ut adversus Elizabetham Angliæ reginam subditi arma capessant;* "It is our will and com-" mand, that the subjects of England take up arms " against their queen." Upon which followed the northern rebellion, and sundry private attempts of the papists to murder her. Afterwards pope Gregory the Fifteenth, having two bastards to provide for, one of his own and another of the emperor's, he bestowed the kingdom of England upon the one, and that of Ireland upon the other: but neither of these prevailing, Sixtus the Fifth curses her afresh, and publishes a crusade against her, and bequeathes the whole right of her dominions to Philip the Second, king of Spain. But when neither the pope's bounty, nor the blessing of his successors, nor the Spanish arms, nor

Italian arts, could prevail against God's providence, which, till the end of her days, pitched its tents about her, pope Clement the Eighth, seeing there was no other remedy, resolved to let her go, like a heretic as she was, and to take more care that another heretic might not succeed her. For which end he sent over two breves into England, one to the clergy, and another to the laity; commanding them not to suffer any but a catholic, though never so near in blood, to succeed her: the design of which was to exclude king James, who was the sole heir apparent to the crown. Upon which, the papists endeavoured to their utmost to prevent his coming in, and afterwards to throw him out again: and when neither took effect, at last they resolve to send him to heaven with a vengeance, by a blow of gunpowder; which was a villainy so black and odious, that the Romanists themselves do blush to own it. And indeed, were it not so apparent from the confessions of the traitors themselves, who acknowledged the Jesuits to be the conspirators that egged them on by their pernicious counsels, swore them to secrecy by the holy Trinity, and gave them the sacrament upon it, that they should neither withdraw themselves from, nor discover it to others, without common consent; I say, were it not for these, and a thousand other notorious circumstances, one would have thought it impossible such a hellish design could have been acted under the wing and patronage of the best religion that ever was. But he that shall consider the bloody principles with which the Roman church hath sophisticated Christianity, must needs confess, that there is no wickedness so horrid, of which her religion will not make her capable: for it

is decreed by the Lateran council, that in case any prince be a favourer of heretics, the pope shall discharge his subjects from their allegiance, and give away his kingdom to some catholic; who upon rooting out those heretics shall possess it without contradiction. And it is the general doctrine of her most celebrated divines, that the pope hath power to depose kings at his pleasure: and this father Parsons determines to be a point of faith, to believe it is in the pope's power to depose heretical princes; and that subjects are, upon their being declared heretical, thereby absolved from all duty of obedience to him; (Philop. 1. Edict. Elizab. p. 149.) And this Bellarmine proves at large, by giving us sundry examples of popes who have deposed kings and emperors; as of Gregory the Second, who deprived the emperor Leo of a great part of his dominions, because he opposed the worship of images; of pope Zachary, who deposed Childerick of France; of Gregory the Seventh, who deposed Henry the Fourth, emperor of Germany; of Innocent the Third, who deposed the emperor Otho the Fourth; of Innocent the Fourth, who deposed Frederick the Second, and Clement the Sixth, who also deposed Lewis the Sixth; and so at last gravely concludes, that because they had done so, they might do so still; (De Rom. Pont. lib. v. c. 8.) as if wickedness were sanctified by wicked examples. So also Gregory de Valentia affirms, (tom. 3. in Thom. dis. i. q. 12. p. 2.) that an heretical prince may by the pope's sentence be deprived of his life, estate, and sovereignty. But beyond all these are those traitorous positions of Mariana the Spanish Jesuit; who affirms (De Reg. Inst. l. i. c. 6.) that it is not only lawful to kill a king upon the pope's sen-

tence, but also upon the verdict of a few learned doctors; and, discoursing *pro* and *con* of the most convenient way of doing it, at last determines poisoning to be the most orthodox and catholic. And if we look into the histories of these last six hundred years, we shall find their practice hath made a bloody comment on their doctrines: for in those days when excommunications from Rome were so terrible, and all things shrunk at the flash of those thunders, it was the ordinary recreation of those insolent prelates to play at football with the crowns of princes, and trample on the necks of emperors; as the Fredericks, the Henries, the Lodovici, Bavari, found by woful experience, who were abandoned of their subjects, their kindred, their allies, their own children; were trodden under foot, deposed from their empires, defamed as heretics, and chased like rascals.

These goodly mirrors, one would think, were sufficient to warn all Christian princes to shake off the yoke that for so many ages hath galled the necks of their ancestors. But if, after so many woful examples, there should remain any doubt of the tyrannic cruelties of Rome, let us remember that pair of royal sacrifices, the two last Henries of France, both barbarously murdered by the pope's executioners: the first by the hand of a friar, whose villainy was commended by pope Sixtus the Fifth, in an oration to his cardinals, wherein he compares the fact with the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, (Orat. Sixt. V. printed at Paris, 1589.) and the friar's virtue and courage, and fervent love to God, to that of Judith, and Eleazar in the Maccabees. Blessed God! what wickedness will these men stick at, the head of whose religion canonizeth regicide and Christians' murder

a meritorious virtue! And why should the papists be ashamed to own the powder treason, which (though it may compare with the blackest intrigues of hell, and was foul enough to bring the Devil himself into disgrace) yet was warranted by the principles of their bloody religion? But it is the old maxim of the Roman politics, never to own an unsuccessful villainy; and, without doubt, had not the Parisian massacre taken effect, in which thirty thousand protestants were slaughtered in one night, the papists would have as loudly disclaimed that, as now they do the powder treason: but it being successful, the news of it at Rome, as their own Thuanus tells us, (Hist. lib. liii.) was welcomed with public festivals, and bonfires, and triumphs; the pope himself congratulating the inhuman cruelty of the French king, commending the faith of those bloody wretches whose hands were imbrued in the slaughter, and distributing his paternal blessings among them: and without all controversy, had Faux and Catesby been but as successful as they, their faith had been as much praised, and their persons as much blessed; and the fifth of November had been as high a festival in the Roman calendar, as it is now in the English. Thus if you trace the Romish religion in all her late progresses, you will find that her way hath led all along through a wilderness of confusion and a red sea of blood: and though now she exerciseth less cruelties in the world than formerly, yet her will is the same, her principles the same, her documents of cutting throats the same, though, blessed be God, her power and interest is abated. For nowadays princes are grown too stout to kiss his holiness's toe, to hold his stirrup, and run like lackeys at his heels: those golden days are gone,

and he, that was wont to command, is fain to entreat his own children: and, as an ingenuous author hath observed, whilst princes can stand upon their own legs, they may go their own pace, as fast and as slow as they please; but should any misfortune throw them upon all four, we shall soon see his holiness get up and ride them what pace he pleases; and being bestrid by such a furious Jehu, to be sure they will want neither whip nor spur to make them as swift to shed blood as ever. For thus, at present, the French king may allow his Huguenots what liberty he pleases, and his holiness is fain to sit still and be silent, being kept in awe by that puissant monarch, whose cannon-bullets are grown too strong for his thunderbolts. But the case was otherwise with Charles the Ninth, who, being weakened by faction, and impoverished by civil broils, was in a manner necessitated to that infamous butchery at Paris, to appease the pope, and prevent the excommunication he threatened him, unless he speedily destroyed the Huguenots with fire and sword. And indeed the pope is bound, both by their councils and canons, to destroy heretics if he can; and, which is all one, to excommunicate their favourers: for this is decreed in the fourth Lateran council, that heretics should be excommunicated, and then delivered up to the lash of the secular powers: but if the prince or secular power, being required or admonished by the church, do not endeavour to their utmost to exterminate and destroy these heretics, he shall be presently excommunicated by the metropolitan or archbishop; and if within a year he doth not amend, his obstinacy shall be signified to the pope, *ut ex tunc ipse vassallos ab ejus fidelitate denuntiet ab-*

solutos, &c. "that from that time the pope may de-
"nounce his subjects absolved from their allegiance
"to him," (Conc. Lat. iv. c. 3.) And Gregory the Thirteenth, in that famous bull of his, entitled, *Literæ processus lectæ die Cœnæ Domini*, excommunicates all Hussites, Wiclivites, Zuinglians, Calvinists, Huguenots, and other heretics, together with their concealers and favourers; and in general all those which defend them, (Collect. divers. Constitut. pars iii. p. 72.) So that, according to this bull, a child cannot conceal his parents, nor a prince rescue his subjects, from the pope's bloodhounds, under the penalty of excommunication. And pope Julius the Third, in another bull, hath determined, "That if any man examine
"the doctrines of the pope by the rule of God's
"word, and, seeing it is different, chance to contra-
"dict it, he shall be rooted out with fire and sword."
(De Vita Ignat. lib. iii. cap. 21. p. 335.) Was not this a precious vicar, do you think, thus to doom men to slaughter for not believing his own unreasonable dictates before the infallible oracles of God himself? And yet those bulls of the popes, with the rest of the Decretals, Extravagants, and Clementines, are all inserted in the body of the canon-law of the church of Rome, and so are made as good and current popery as ever was coined in the council of Trent.

And now, after all this, methinks it is impossible we should be so besotted as to trust the cruel courtesies of Rome, whose religion breathes nothing but blood and slaughter. The cry indeed of the Roman factors among us is nothing but toleration and liberty of conscience; and since the laws have proscribed them for their treasonous practices, and for swearing

themselves vassals to the pope, whose countermands (if they are faithful to their own principles) must evacuate all their obligations to their natural prince, what tragical exclamations do they make against persecution! as if they meant to have the monopoly of it, that nobody might persecute but themselves; and though in the popish dominions they are fell and rabid as so many Libyan tigers, yet no sooner do they set foot upon the English shores, but, as if there were an enchantment in the soil, the wolves turn sheep immediately, or at least disguise themselves in sheep's clothing. But if ever these sweet and merciful gentlemen get into the saddle again, we shall soon find them in another note; and persecution would be zeal again, and racks and gibbets catholic arguments; and there will be no way to illuminate the understandings of us heretics like the light of a flaming fagot. For how can we expect it should be otherwise, when we reflect upon what is past, when the Marian days are yet within our prospect? And it is not half an age ago since Ireland swam in protestant blood, which was spilt by the instigation of some of these fawning hypocrites, who now declaim forsooth for liberty of conscience, and defy persecution and all its works. But this pretence, it is evident, is only a copy of their countenances; and without all controversy, the bottom of their design is only to persuade us to let them grow till they are strong enough to cut our throats: for it is the subtilty of these harpies never to shew their talons till they have their prey within their reach. But if what they pretend were real, why do they not allow what they plead for, and indulge that liberty to dissenters abroad, which they here crave for themselves? Why do they not as much exclaim against the Spanish in-

quisition, which hath been confirmed by so many bulls of their own popes, as they do against the English laws; and condemn the barbarous cruelties of the one, as well as the milder severities of the other? For till they do so, we have reason to believe, that it is not against persecution they exclaim, but against being persecuted. But in the mean time, how can we expect that they should be merciful to our bodies, whose religion damns our souls? or, if ever they get uppermost, which God prevent, they that are so uncharitable now as to shut us out of heaven, should be so charitable then as not to drive us out of the world? For this is a maxim founded upon the experience of all ages, That that religion which damns us when it is weak, will burn us when it is able.

Wherefore, since God in his mercy hath delivered us from the Romish tyranny, let us with thankful hearts extol and praise his goodness, and take heed for the future, lest by our divisions or apostasies we return again unto that yoke of bondage: and since the emissaries of Rome are now so busily pursuing their old maxim, *Divide et impera*, and blowing the coals of our divisions, in hope at last to warm their hands at our flames, O that we would now study the ways of peace and reconciliation! and not, like the miserable Jews, fall out among ourselves, while the Roman is at our gates. For all the time we are contending in the ship, our enemy is boring a hole at the bottom; and while we are fomenting our unhappy differences, and tearing our own wounds wider, the priest and Jesuit are at work in our doublets; who, ever since their gunpowder treason was defeated, have been strewing trains of wildfire among ourselves, to make us our own executioners,

and blow us up by our own hands: for what else hath been their business among us, but only to raise sects and factions, and sow discords and divisions in the church of England, which, they know, is the only bulwark of the protestant religion among us? O would to God we would once heartily attempt to countermine them! as we might yet easily do, would we but once lay aside our unchristian passions and prejudices, and study mutual compliances, and prefer religion before a faction, and abate some little punctilios to the soberer and more governable dissenters. These things, if they may obtain amongst us, would yet undoubtedly secure us against the attempts of our adversaries, and render their most hopeful designs desperate and unfeasible. But if we will be deaf to all the arguments which our common interests and dangers suggest to us; if we will still squander into sects and parties, and nothing will serve our turns but the ruin of that poor church which for so many years hath been the shelter and sanctuary of the protestant religion, the time may come perhaps, when we may dearly repent of our own follies, and remember with tears in our eyes, that we had once an opportunity to be happy. Let me therefore beseech you, even by all that love you bear to the protestant religion, to your own safety, and to the lives and souls of your posterity, to lay aside all faction, bitterness, and animosity; lest by your unchristian divisions you open the floodgates of popery on yourselves, and cut a gap to let in the Stygian lake of ignorance, idolatry, superstition, and blood; which God of his infinite mercy avert. *To whom be honour, and glory, and power, and dominion for ever.*

SERMON III.

PREACHED BEFORE

THE ARTILLERY-COMPANY OF LONDON AT ST. MARY LE BOW, SEPTEMBER 15, 1680.

PROVERBS xxviii. 1.

The wicked flee when no man pursues; but the righteous are bold as a lion.

THE two great ingredients that go into the composition of an accomplished soldier are courage and good conduct. As for the latter of these, it is the peculiar subject of your profession, and falls not under the cognizance of our spiritual tactics: nor was it ever well for the world, when the pulpits, which were designed for oracles of the gospel of peace, rung with battles and alarms; and that ἡμέρα σάλπιγξ, that soft and still trumpet of meekness, and charity, and obedience, which should sound from hence, was outnoised and drowned with the thunder of drums and the roaring of cannons. Sure I am, in our commission we have no instructions to put on any armour but *the whole armour of God*, to list any volunteers but for heaven, or proclaim any war but between men and their lusts, from which all other wars and fightings do proceed. And being of so distant a profession, we may very well be excused, if we understand not the language of your discipline, if we cannot talk in rank and file, and flank and rear our discourses with military allusions; in which it is as easy for us to be absurd and ridiculous, as for a

fresh-water soldier, that being to make a speech to a company of sailors, will needs interlard his harangue with terms of navigation. Wherefore, in reverence to your skill and judgment in your own profession, I shall choose to leave Hercules's club in his own hands, who knows much better than I how to wield and manage it, it being, in my opinion, not altogether so decent for a divine to read lectures of war before Hannibal.

But as for that other ingredient of a good soldier, viz. courage and resolution, (it being a Christian virtue, and as such necessary, not only (though more especially) for you, but for all others who intend to continue faithful soldiers under the common Captain of our salvation,) it is upon this account a very proper argument both for the speaker and the hearers, and as suitable to the place as it is to the occasion: and therefore, in compliance with both, I have chosen this text, in which you have cowardice and courage resolved into their first principles; *The wicked flee when no man pursues; but the righteous is bold as a lion.*

In these words you have all mankind distinguished by their proper characters into two sorts. The first is the wicked; under which name all bad men, of whatsoever denomination, are comprehended, whether they be irreligious in their belief, profane in their manners, or hypocritical in their designs and intentions; and the character here, by which they are all distinguished, is, that they *flee when no man pursues;* i. e. they are of such base and timorous spirits, that they are ready to run away from the least shadow of danger, though it hath nothing of substance or reality in it; and, being haunted with

an ill-boding mind, flee before the spectres of their own fancies. Which words are not to be so understood, as if every wicked man were a coward; for that contradicts experience; and we know, there is a sort of valour which naturally springs out of the very crasis and temper of men's bodies, which is nothing else but a certain impetus, or brisk fermentation of the blood and spirits: and this is common to bad men with good, accordingly as they happen into a warm and vigorous constitution. The meaning therefore is, that they are cowards in their causes; that their wickedness naturally tends to effeminate them; and will certainly do it, if it be not strongly counter-influenced by the vigour of their bodily temper. The second sort into which mankind is here distinguished is the righteous; by which phrase the scripture is wont to express all good men in general; and that for very good reason; because all instances of goodness whatsoever are in strictness righteousness, either to God, or to ourselves, or to our neighbours: so that justice, or righteousness, is the common point whence all the lines of our duty are drawn, and wherein they all concentre.

Now of this sort of men the proper character is, that they are as *bold as a lion*. Which words do not import every good man to be actually a *cordelion*, to be as bold and stouthearted as that courageous animal is, before whom all the beasts of the forest do tremble: for as some bad men are valiant by nature, so are some good timorous and faint-hearted: and it is a very hard thing to cure by discipline that which is the natural defect of constitution. This expression must be understood in the same mitigated sense as the former, *The righteous*

are bold, i. e. their righteousness tends to make them so; it hath an animating virtue in it, as will (if it be not overpowered by an invincible timorousness of temper) convert a poltron into a hero, imbolden the meanest spirited to confront the grimmest danger, and charge it with an undaunted resolution. For thus the scripture usually speaks of men, as if they actually were what they have great cause and reason to be. Thus in Isaiah lvii. 20. *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;* i. e. they are continually agitated with their own restless thoughts, just like the sea with its reciprocal tides: not that this is always actually their condition, but that they have always just reason to be so. So Prov. xvi. 13. *Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.* Which is not so to be understood, as if in fact it were always so; for experience too often evinces the contrary: but the meaning is, that kings, above all men, have reason to delight in men of truth, and honesty, and fidelity. And so in the text, *The wicked flee when no man pursues;* that is, a wicked man hath great reason to be timorous; for he hath all the moral causes of baseness and cowardice within his breast: *but the righteous is bold as a lion;* i. e. he hath reason to be so, his mind being inspired with the most pregnant principles of a brave and undaunted resolution.

The words being thus explained, the sense of them resolves into this proposition, That wickedness naturally tends to dishearten and cowardize men; but righteousness and goodness, to encourage and imbolden them. The truth of which I might easily

demonstrate by an induction of particulars, were it proper to draw a list of those ancient heroes, whose names are renowned in the memoirs of fame, the greatest part of whom were as illustrious for their piety and goodness, as for their valour and great achievements; and who, as the historian observes of the ancient Romans, conquered much more by the charms of their virtues, than by the terror of their swords. But I am not at leisure to tell stories; and therefore, for the confirmation of the argument in hand, I shall endeavour, as briefly as I can, to represent to you what those things are which do naturally contribute to the making men courageous, and to shew you, that they are all to be found in righteousness, and their contraries in wickedness: which if I can make good, I doubt not, will abundantly convince you, that the best way to be good soldiers is to be good men; and that though you may furnish yourselves with art and conduct in the field, yet you can never acquire true courage and bravery, till you have been trained and exercised under the banner of Jesus.

Now to make men truly valiant and courageous, these six things are necessary.

First, That they be free, and within their own command.

Secondly, That they be well hardened to endure difficulties and inconveniencies.

Thirdly, That they be well satisfied in the nature of their actions and undertakings.

Fourthly, That they have a hopeful prospect of being well seconded.

Fifthly, That they have a probable security of good success.

Sixthly, That they be borne up with the expecta-

tion of a glorious reward. All which causes of courage are to be found in righteousness, and their direct contraries in a sinful and wicked course of life.

I. One cause that very much contributes to the making men courageous, is their being free, and within their own command: for slavery naturally depresses the mind, and by accustoming men to a severe and rigorous treatment, habituates them to fear and pusillanimity. It is no new observation, that slaves are generally cowards; of the truth of which we have many woful instances in the world: for how many nations are there who were heretofore renowned for their courage and puissance, when they enjoyed their liberties and properties, under gentle and benign governments, that are now utterly unmanned and dispirited by oppression and slavery? But now a righteous man can never be enslaved, because he hath gotten the victory of himself, and is his own master; he hath trained up his passions to a severe obedience to his reason, and so has all his motions under his own command; and it being in his power (at least in a good measure) not to love any thing but what he hath good reason to love; not to desire any thing but what he hath fair hope to enjoy; not to delight in any thing but what is in his power to possess and keep; it being, I say, in his power to be affected as he pleases, and to regulate his own motions according as he thinks fit and reasonable, he may choose whether he will be a coward or no: and should the grimmest danger stare him in the face, yet supposing him to have such a command of himself, as not to desire what he cannot have, not to dread what he cannot prevent, not to grieve and vex at what he cannot avoid,

he may throw down the gauntlet to it, and defy it to do its worst.

Now one great office of righteousness is to do right to a man's self, to rescue him from the tyranny of his passions, and reduce him under the command of his reason; and the more successful it is in this great undertaking, the more valiant and magnanimous it must necessarily render us: for the more a man's passions are subdued to his reason, the more presence of mind he will have in all dangers and difficulties, and the more his reason will be to counsel and advise him, and to fortify his heart with brave considerations. So that when a man hath made any considerable progress in the conquest of himself, he will be so much in his own power, that no danger will be able to divide him from himself, or scare him from the post of his reason; and while death is whizzing about his ears, and blood and slaughter, terror and confusion, are round about him, his mind will be environed with invincible thoughts, and guarded with such puissant considerations, that no outward force will be able to approach it. And thus freedom, you see, from the slavery of passion, which is an effect of righteousness, is an effectual cause of courage and magnanimity.

But in wickedness a great part of this slavery consists: for in this state men are entirely governed by passion and appetite. As for their reason, that sits by as an idle spectator of the brutish scene of their actions, and intermeddles no farther in it, than to censure and condemn it, having no other office allowed it, but to cater for their appetites, and enable them to play the brutes with greater luxury and relish; and being under the command of such masters as

these, we are out of our own power, and cannot dispose of ourselves as we please: for either our passions and appetites must be governed by our reason, or by the goods and evils that are without us; and if these govern us, we are not our own men, but do live in subjection to a foreign power; and we must be what the things without us will have us, and not what our own mind and reason: our mind must turn about like as the wind blows, and, like water, we must take our form from the vessels we are poured into. And when the passions and appetites that overrule us, are thus overruled by the chances and contingences without us, how is it possible we should be truly courageous? For now when any danger looks us in the face, we can have no present relief from our reason, having all along disused ourselves to consult and advise with it; and so every alarm of danger from without will presently raise a tumult within, and put the whole soul into an uproar; in which the mind is left naked of all relief, and utterly abandoned of those wise and brave thoughts which should guard and defend it. And a man's thoughts and considerations being thus defeated and put to the rout, he must either sink under his danger, or charge headlong upon it foolhardily: for now he hath no other courage to support him, but either that of a mastiff, that fights because his blood is in brisk fermentation; or that of a rat, that flees in his enemy's face, because he is desperate of escaping.

II. Another cause that mightily contributes to the making men courageous, is their being well hardened to endure difficulties and inconveniencies: for how distant soever a state of softness and delicacy is from that of slavery, yet it concentres with it in the

effect, and by a different quality produces the same base and unmanly temper. For as slavery cows the spirit by rigorous and servile usage, and suppresses and stifles all its generous emotions; so softness and delicacy doth so melt and dissolve it, that it hath not the firmness to resist any violent impressions; but is ready to shrink at the least touch of evil or appearance of danger, having been accustomed to nothing but pleasure, and wrapt up in ease and voluptuousness. And hence we see, that though the valour and courage of nations be very much owing to the temper of the climes in which they are situated; yet, by the exercise of temperance and severe virtue, the inhabitants of the most effeminate climes have sometimes improved themselves into the most heroic and magnanimous of all nations; as the Romans and Persians, for instance. As on the contrary, those who by the temperament of their native air and country are naturally the most hardy and courageous, have many times by their dissolute manners been broken and dispirited into the most wretched cowards; as the English, for instance: who, though they have been ever remarked for a people of a daring and undaunted genius, have yet sometimes been so melted by their own luxuries, as that they became preys to every dog that hunted them.

But now righteousness, including in it those severe virtues of industry and patience, temperance, and mortification of our appetites, doth effectually contribute to the confirming and hardening the tempers of men, and the taking off that softness and delicacy of spirit, which renders them so tender and impressive: so that by exercising ourselves in these manly virtues, by inuring ourselves to an active life,

and to bear evils and injuries with a brave indifferency; by reducing our appetites to the measures of nature, and moderately disciplining them with fasting and abstinence, we shall by degrees be so steeled against hardships and difficulties, that that which makes effeminate minds to flinch and startle will scarce be able to make any impression upon us. For as the light of the sun, and the freshness of the air, which are apt to offend those that are tender and sickly, are not only tolerable, but delightful to men of hale and vigorous constitutions; so, many of those little hardships, which do so trouble and incommode the tender and delicate, are so far from disturbing the patient and temperate, that they only refresh and divert them. And it is such a mind only that is fit for a soldier, that will enable him to undergo the glorious toils and fatigues of war, to endure a hard march in the day, and to sleep upon a harder pillow at night; to follow victory through heat and cold, thirst and famine, sweat and blood, and seize and pluck it from the arms of hazards and difficulties, wherewith it is compassed and surrounded. These are things that require a firm, a hardy mind, that hath been trained up in severity, and is grown strong, and hale, and vigorous in the exercise of a manly virtue.

But now wickedness softens and dissolves the temper, by letting loose the desires and appetites of our flesh to sensuality and voluptuousness, to rioting and drunkenness, to chambering and wantonness, to pride and vanity, to gluttony and idleness, and all manner of effeminate delicacy and dissoluteness, which are such vices as will emasculate the bravest mind, and by degrees spoil the strain of the most va-

lorous nations: and were I to prescribe for the cowardizing of a nation, it should be the bowl of intemperance, the bed of sloth, and a Delilah's lap; which are charms sufficient to effeminate a hero, and metamorphose a lion into a timorous hare. For when men have been trained up in excess and voluptuousness, and their minds are contempered and naturalized to it, the least hardship or difficulty will be terrible to them: so that if ever they should be forced out of the lap of pleasure into the lists of war, ill quarters and a hard march will kill them without a battle; and the least sense of pain or appearance of danger will presently strike their spirits and air, and turn all their blood into a trembling jelly. If the business of soldiers were only to wear a scarf or a feather, or to swelter an hour or two in buff; if they were to fight in a field of down, and to spill no other blood but that of the grape, there is no doubt but the school of Epicurus would make an incomparable nursery for the camp. But to march under a load of armour all day, and then to freeze to the ground at night; to sleep with drums in their ears, and be awaked with alarms; to run on upon spears, and charge at the mouths of cannons, whilst they are spitting fire and roaring out destruction; these are such rude and scurvy things as will never be endured by a soft and delicate epicure.

III. Another cause that mightily contributes to the making men courageous is, their being well satisfied with themselves, and with the nature of their actions and undertakings: for our understanding being our leading faculty, the eye that is to direct the feet of our practice, and to guide and manage all our voluntary motions; it is impossible that whilst that

doth either disapprove or doubt of our actions, we should ever be able to act with steadiness and assurance: for while a man acts with a misgiving mind, and that which should be the guide of his actions is dissatisfied with his way, he walks like a benighted traveller in a dangerous road, and is fain to feel out his steps, and tread gingerly and cautiously, lest he should stumble into a bog or a precipice; and so being accustomed to act with fear and anxiety, his courage dissolves, and his heart grows creeping and timorous.

But now the righteous man acts with the full consent and approbation of his mind, and has no byways from the road of reason and conscience; but keeping straight forward, as he doth, in the plain tracks of eternal goodness, he treads firmly and boldly, being secure of the ground he goes upon, and is neither ashamed nor afraid of his own actions; which being such as his best and purest reason approves, have the cheerful *euges* and applauses of his conscience continually echoing and resounding after them; and this animates his courage, and invigorates his heart with a generous confidence and assurance; in the sense of this he can smile upon misfortune, bid defiance to danger, and bear up his head in the lowest condition. For as long as his own mind doth neither threaten nor accuse him, he can retire into himself when he is driven out of other retreats, and there live merry and secure in despite of the world: and while he can house himself in the sense of his own virtue and innocence, he hath an impregnable shelter against all storms from without. Well therefore might the apostle call it *the breastplate of righteousness*, Ephes. vi. 14. it being that

which secures us against all outward violence, and renders our minds invulnerable by the smartest blows of misfortune.

But so long as a man lives wickedly, he can never be satisfied with himself, because in the whole course of his actions he contradicts his own reason, and offers violence to those eternal laws of righteousness and goodness which are inseparably interwoven with his faculties: so that whenever he comes to appear before himself, to answer for his actions at his own tribunal, his own mind explodes and condemns him; and, like a false renegado, as he is, from the natural principles of his reason, he is fain to run the gantelope through the terrors and reproaches of his own conscience; which he hath no other way to escape but by running out of himself, and taking sanctuary in the crowd of his lusts or secular affairs and diversions: for, as Tertullian observes, *omne malum aut timore aut pudore natura perfudit;* "nature hath "poured fear or shame upon the face of all wicked-"ness:" both which do naturally intimidate our minds, and for different reasons incline us to run away; shame, that we may not be seen; and fear, that we may not be taken. When therefore men have always these two furies at their heels, haunting and pursuing them throughout the whole course of their actions, what wretched cowards must they be, when any outward danger or calamity approaches them! When all is smooth and prosperous without, they may shelter themselves there from the persecutions of their conscience; and when all is calm and serene within, they may shelter themselves there from the persecutions of the world: but when both are bestormed, whither can they flee? When danger

and destruction are drawn up in battle array against us from without, and we are alarmed at the same time with the shame and terror of a guilty conscience from within, so that we are charged all at once front and rear, and can neither go on nor retreat without cutting our way through horror and confusion; this is enough to disarm the stoutest resolution, and sink the courage of a lion into a panic dread and desperation.

IV. Another cause which very much contributes to the making men courageous is, their having a hopeful prospect of being well seconded: for when a man apprehends that he is left all alone in the midst of danger, or that he must encounter it with unequal forces; that he is not backed with sufficient auxiliaries, or that the advantage of strength and power lies on the other side, it must needs be a mighty allay to his courage. Now the greatest power that we can either dread or depend on is God's; and therefore according as we apprehend him to be engaged either for or against us, our courage must necessarily rise or sink: for the apprehensions of God and his providence are so natural to us, and do cleave so close to our minds, that though with our jovial airs we may sometimes lull them asleep, yet the least alarm of danger usually rouses and awakes them, and puts our mind upon the inquiry whether he be for or against us; and according to the answer we receive from that bosom oracle, or our good or bad conscience, we are naturally confident or afraid.

Now righteousness, being the crown and glory of God's own nature, and that for which he infinitely loves and esteems himself, can never fail, wheresoever

it resides, to engage him of its side. When therefore we are so fully assured, that *the righteous Lord loves righteousness;* upon the testimony of our conscience, that we are sincerely righteous, we cannot but conclude him to be our ally and confederate, and consequently that our interest is his, and his power ours; and when I have his all-seeing eye to direct, and his all-powerful arm to assist and second me; when I have all the attributes of his infinite nature pitching their tents like guardian angels about me, and my head is covered in the day of battle with the impenetrable helmet of his providence; with what an undaunted resolution must such a persuasion inspire me! We have a late and woful instance among ourselves of the courage with which a false persuasion that God was with them did animate and inspire men, when they were wont to say grace to their bloody banquets, and rise from their knees with an enthusiastic assurance, and so run on to the battle, flushed with powerful incomes and manifestations of victory; when the flaming zealots fell on with psalms in their mouths, and chased the huffing hectors; and, notwithstanding the disadvantage of the bad poetry, and the worse cause, the psalms proved too hard for their oaths and blasphemies. When therefore, upon firm and rational principles, upon turning their eyes from God to themselves, upon comparing grace with grace, and feature with feature, and surveying the fair agreement of their nature with his, they are throughly persuaded and satisfied that he is their friend; this must needs mightily animate their courage, and enable them to bear up against the most threatening dangers.

But when a man is conscious to himself that he

is in rebellion against God, and thereupon apprehends himself, not only cashiered from his protection, but also exposed to his almighty vengeance; this must needs render him timorous and fainthearted, if he hath any consideration about him: for, alas! who can be courageous against God? What heart can bear up against the terror of his thunderbolts? which are always shot with such an infallible aim that none can escape, and with such an invincible force that none can resist them. So that a wicked soldier must either forego his reason or his courage, and degenerate into a craven or a brute: for with what heart can he look an enemy in the face, when he considers that the Lord of hosts is against him; who can look him into nothing, and confound him with the breath of his nostrils when he pleases; who can array the whole creation against him; and whilst his enemies from below are thundering volleys of destruction at him, can play upon him from above with all the artillery of heaven, and cause the stars in their courses to fight against him? What a miserable plight must the poor wretch be in, if he hath any sober thoughts about him, when heaven, and earth, and his own conscience are in confederacy against him, and are storming all at once about his ears! But I must hasten. Again,

V. Another cause that very much contributes to the making men courageous is, their having a probable security of good success; for hope is the spur of valour, that quickens and puts life into it, that revives it when it is drooping, and supplies it with fresh recruits of spirits and vigour when it is languishing and ready to expire; and when once hope, which is the soul of it, is departed from it, it presently falls prostrate, or converts into desperate rage.

But as for the righteous, such is their condition, that they can never be hopeless; because while they continue such, they live in a constant dependence upon the protection of that God who overrules and disposes all the events that can befall them; and being continually animated with this persuasion, that there is nothing can happen to them but by his decree or permission, who is infinitely wise, and knows what is best for them; infinitely good, and wills what he knows; infinitely powerful, and doth what he will: they will still be expecting good issues from the worst events; and so their hope will shine bright upon them in the darkest condition. When their enemies are threatening or designing mischief against them, they know that their almighty Guardian and Protector holds their malice in a chain, and that it can never bite, how fiercely soever it may bark at them, unless he let it loose; which they are secure he will never do, but for such wise and good ends as they themselves would approve of, did they but fully comprehend them. They have duly considered what their enemies can inflict; and do find, that the worst of it is tolerable whilst they have a God to depend upon; that though banishment be a dreadful word, it imports but little more in itself than travel, or a long voyage, which is a voluntary exile; that unless they will, they cannot be banished from God; and that so long as they secure their innocence, their conscience, and their hope of heaven, they may make themselves a paradise in the most barren wilderness; that if they should suffer imprisonment, and be secluded from human conversation, it is no such dismal thing for a man to be kept within doors; to be snatched out of the crowd and

hurry of the world, and forced to retire within himself, and converse with God, and heaven, and his own thoughts; that these are company enough to entertain a man's solitudes, and to supply the want of the noise of the world, in which there is commonly so much folly and discord, that if they should be tormented to death with instruments of cruelty, which is the worst thing that can happen to them, they must have died at last, though not by such unnatural means; only now they die a little sooner, and so anticipate their eternal happiness; and that if they had died a natural death, probably the torment might have been much greater; that they might have languished much longer under the gout, or stone, or strangury, than under the hands of the executioner, and endured the same degree of torment without the comfort of dying in a brave cause, or of being assured of an immortal recompense. And having thus considered things round about, their hope bears up bravely against all events; and from the blessed rock of salvation, where it dwells, looks down upon the waves of their enemies' malice, and smiles at their vain attempts to overwhelm it, and securely expects till they have dashed themselves in pieces, and are forced to retire back again in empty passion and foam. Thus, while we depend upon God, in whose hand is the disposal of all success, we shall never want reason to hope well; and whatsoever dangers may threaten, or mischiefs befall us, our courage will be still supported with this brave persuasion, That nothing can come amiss that comes from a good God, who knows how to extract good out of the worst of our evils, and to render the rankest poisons cordial.

But as for the wicked, they can expect nothing from God, whilst they continue so, but dire and dismal effects: for all their actions being open defiances to his authority, they have all the reason in the world to conclude, that he will deal with them as enemies, that he will throw them from his care and protection for ever, and persecute them with fire and sword to eternal destruction. When therefore they consider that he hath the disposal of all those events that befall them, they cannot but see great cause to be afraid of every thing; to suspect even his favours, lest there should be a snake in the grass; lest he should fume their enjoyments with poison, and infuse a disease into every breath of their air; lest he should make their table a snare to them, and serve in the plentiful provisions of it only to fatten them for the day of slaughter; lest those little successes he sometimes gives them should be only a retreat of his providence to draw them into an ambuscado, and involve them into sorer mischiefs; lest when he rescues from less evils, it should be with an intent to reserve them for greater; and when he delivers them from the frogs, and the lice, and the locusts, he should be only preparing a more glorious vengeance for them, and contriving to overwhelm them in the Red sea: in a word, lest he should heap the good things of this world upon them, as the Romans did their earrings and jewels on the treacherous vestal, only to crush and smother them, and carry them aloft, as the eagle did the tortoise, with an intent to give them a more fatal downfal. For how can they be secure of any thing that comes from the hand of that God who is inflamed with such a just indignation against them? And then when any danger is

marching towards them, they have nothing but the arm of flesh to confide in; and if that prove too weak, they are desperate. But how can they be secure that this should prevail, when they know there are such numberless accidents under the command of their almighty enemy, that can either disarm it, or turn the point of its weapon on itself? But then, if any storm happen to overtake them, whither can they go? Alas! they have no harbour to put in at in all the dominions of God; no promise of deliverance, no security of support or protection, no ground to hope for any future advantage from the present calamity; but, like miserable wrecks, they are abandoned to the mercy of the winds and waves, and in a fearful expectation how the next billow will dispose of them, whether it will dash them on a rock or drive them on a quicksand: and in such dismal circumstances who but a madman can be courageous?

VI. And lastly, Another cause which very much contributes to the making men courageous is, the expectation of a glorious reward. Good pay will make brave soldiers: for when men have a good interest in any difficult undertaking, that will buoy up their courage, and render them firm and resolute against all the dangers and difficulties that oppose them: whereas when they have little or nothing at stake, they are commonly indifferent whether they win or lose. Reward therefore being the centre of our hope, and hope the support of our courage, we shall in all attempts be more or less courageous, proportionably to the reward which we expect to reap from our labour.

But what reward is comparable to that of a right-

eous man? who lives upon the blessed hope of being translated, when he goes from hence, to those immortal regions of bliss and joy, where all the blessed inhabitants live in a continued fruition of their utmost wishes, being every moment entertained with fresh and enravishing scenes of pleasure; where all their happiness is eternal, and all their eternity nothing else but one continued act of love, and praise, and joy, and triumph; where there are no sighs or tears, no intermixtures of sorrow or misery; but every heart is full of joy, and every joy is a quintessence, and every happy moment is crowned with some fresh and new enjoyment. And the being animated with such a glorious hope is enough to make the most crest-fallen soul courageous: for the worst that any danger can threaten is death: and what need he be afraid of passing this cold fatal stream, that sees a heaven on the farther shore? Such a blessed prospect is enough to enable a man to outface the fearful of fearfuls, and to charge through all his horrors with an undaunted resolution; to make a soldier *mock at fear*, like the warlike horse in Job, and to stand at the mouth of a breach, while it is spewing thunder and lightning. For while he is possessed with this blessed hope, every danger beckons him to heaven, and every wound is a sallyport into a blessed eternity: and being assured in his own mind, that the bullet that strikes his body to the ground must shoot up his soul above the stars, and that if it be his hap to fall in the battle, he shall certainly rise from the bed of honour to the crown of glory; he laughs at the impotent threatenings of danger, and bravely defies it to do its worst.

But the quite contrary to this is the case of wick-

ed men: for though whilst they stand at a distance from danger, they may make a shift to drown their sense of another world in deep draughts and loud laughter; yet we usually find, that when danger draws near them, and begins to shake its dart at their breast, *natura recurrit*, the bold men begin to quake, and are seized with dismal expectations of a fearful state of things on the other side the grave. It is Plato's observation long since, [De Rep. lib. i.] Ἐπειδάν τις ἐγγὺς ᾖ τοῦ οἴεσθαι τελευτήσειν, εἰσέρχεται αὐτῷ φόβος καὶ φροντὶς περὶ ὧν ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν οὐκ εἰσῄει· "When "a man imagines himself within danger of dying, "he is usually seized with a great horror and anxiety "concerning those future things which before he "never thought of." Now how must it needs dastardize a soldier, if, when he is going into the battle, the near approach of his danger should awaken such thoughts as these in his mind: I am now entering upon the confines of the world of spirits; and if, by any of those winged messengers of death that fly about me, I should be despatched thither, Lord, what will become of me? My conscience condemns me, and these numerous guilts that stare me in the face bode me a woful fate there; so that I plainly perceive I am marching upon the brinks of a black and dismal eternity; and that if I happen to fall, I am lost and undone for ever. If with such thoughts as these about him he dares stand his ground, he is a courageous sinner indeed, fit for a forlorn hope: but, alas! how is it possible he should keep up his heart, when his misgiving conscience suggests such fearful thoughts as these to him; when it tells him, that his enemies' artillery are charged with hell, and if they hit, will strike him down into the bottomless

abyss; that their swords will cut through to his very soul, and wound it to eternal death; that every bullet they shoot at him brings with it a passport to a woful eternity; and that at the mouth of every wound they give him, there waits a devil to seize his soul as it sallies forth, and carry it captive to the dark prisons of the damned. Doubtless, such dire abodings as these, which are natural to guilty consciences, must necessarily appal the stoutest resolution.

And now, having given you such an abundant proof of the truth of the assertion in the text, I shall conclude the whole with one word of advice to you of this honourable society.

You are a body of men, whose bad or good conduct of yourselves is of very great importance to the public, each man of you being virtually a company; having not only interest enough to raise your own men, but also skill enough to form them into excellent soldiers. You are the standing mint, where the brave English mettle is to be coined, and to receive its martial stamp and impression: and being so, it is doubtless very much in your power either to raise or to debase it: and since it is from your discipline that your soldiers must learn their manners as well as their postures, it concerns you to be instructed, not only with the exactest skill, but also with the bravest courage. And from whence you are to derive this, I think, hath been sufficiently demonstrated, even from righteousness and universal goodness.

Wherefore let me beseech you, as ye are men, and Christians, and soldiers, to betake yourselves to the study and practice of this comprehensive duty, in which all virtue and religion is included, to purge

your consciences from dead works, and discharge yourselves of all those pollutions of the flesh and spirit which do so naturally disarm your courage, and overspread your minds with baseness and pusillanimity; and to exercise yourselves in all that piety and devotion towards God, loyalty and obedience towards your prince, justice and charity towards one another, temperance and sobriety towards yourselves, to which religion and right reason, the frame of your natures, and your circumstances and relations oblige you. By the constant practice of which, you will acquire such a noble and useful courage, as will render you a lifeguard to your prince, a wall and bulwark to your country, and make your famous artillery-ground a sanctuary to your city: for the courage which springs out of righteousness is such as verifies your own motto, *Arma pacis fulcra*, as props up the temple of peace, and preserves it from being violated and profaned by the sacrilegious rudeness of those that are given to change: for it consists not in an unruly warmth, or headstrong violence of temper, in an unbridled fierceness, or factious impatience of government; but is calm, and well managed, and easily commanded; so gentle, that it neither throws nor runs away with its rider; and yet so well mettled too, that it never tires under him. For if you be courageous from a principle of righteousness, you will honour the king as well as fear God, and obey his ordinances for God's sake: you will never conduct a rebellious design, under the sacred banner of religion, nor pretend loyalty to God, to colour your disloyalty to his vicegerent; you will never press the scriptures to fight against the king, nor arm his political against his personal capacity, nor assume his authority to cut

off his head: nor, on the other hand, will you ever allow him to be unkinged by the sentence of a domineering prelate, and plead that for your warrant to depose and murder him; you will never yield, that a papal bull hath right to countermand the twelfth of the Romans, and dispense with a subject's allegiance to his prince, in despite of, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers:* in a word, you will never confront those loyal admonitions of St. Peter and St. Paul with the treasonous canons of the councils of the ungodly; nor levy arms against your prince upon that counterfeit commission of his being pronounced a heretic by a congregation of impostors.

No, no; if you sincerely study and practise the rules of righteousness, you will be too wise and too honest to be choused and imposed upon by the transparent sophistries of those hypocrites, of whatsoever denomination, who would fain fetch pretences for their treasons and rebellions from the most loyal and peaceable religion that ever was. And being thus animated with the courage of righteous men, if ever your king and country should need your assistance against foreign or domestic enemies, which God forbid! you will be bravely qualified to be their champions; and in being so, may promise yourselves honour and victory here, and an everlasting triumph hereafter: which God of his infinite mercy grant. *To whom be honour, and glory, and power*, &c.

SERMON IV.

PREACHED BEFORE

THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR AND COURT OF ALDERMEN AT GUILDHALL-CHAPEL, DEC. 16, 1683.

PROV. xxiv. 21.

And meddle not with those that are given to change.

I SHALL not trouble you with the various acceptations of the Hebrew word *schonim*, which the Chaldee render, *fools*, or, as we say, *changelings*; and which our translators, more suitably to what goes before, render, *those that are given to change*; for in the former part of the text, he advises his son *to fear the Lord and honour the king*; that is, to reverence and obey the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, and, in reverence to him, to be dutiful and obedient to the king, who is his immediate vicegerent and representative upon earth, and upon that account ought to be honoured and obeyed: and therefore, "My son," says he, "as thou wouldest be "secured from all disloyalty and disobedience to thy "king, in contemning whose authority thou openly "affrontest the supreme Lord of the world, whose "invisible majesty he personates, *meddle not with* "*those that are given to change*; i. e. who either "out of a swelling ambition of being uppermost, or "a private revenge against their superiors, or a rest-"less peevishness and impatience of rule, or affecta-"tion of novelty, or design to repair their broken

" fortunes out of the public ruins, are for introducing
" changes and alterations in the government: with
" such as these do not mingle thyself, not so much
" as to listen to their insinuations, or to credit or
" propagate their reports, or to support and counte-
" nance their cause, either with thy tongue or pen,
" or money or suffrage, or to be any other way aid-
" ing or assisting to their factious and seditious de-
" signs."

In the prosecution of this argument I shall endeavour, first, to represent to you the great folly and danger of engaging with such as *are given to change;* that is, with parties and factions against the government. And, secondly, to give you the proper marks and characters of such parties and factions, by which all well-minded men may know them, and avoid intermeddling with them.

First, I shall endeavour to represent the great folly and danger of engaging with factions against the government; of which I shall give you these five instances:

First, It exposes our understanding to the most erroneous prejudices and misrepresentations of things.

Secondly, It exposes our will to the blackest and most diabolical affections.

Thirdly, It tempts us to an high neglect of, and indifferency in, the greatest and most necessary things of religion.

Fourthly, It involves us in the most indirect courses, and then trains us on from bad to worse.

Fifthly, It ordinarily snares and entangles us in the greatest temporal mischiefs and calamities.

First, Our engaging with factions against the government exposes our understanding to the most er-

roneous prejudice: for it is the constant method of factions, to prejudice the minds of the people with false and spiteful glosses upon the actions of their superiors, with scandalous forgeries, or foul misconstructions of their fairest meanings and most honourable designs; without which base arts it would be impossible for them to disaffect the vulgar to any tolerable government, or to alarm their passions, and fears, and jealousies, which are the usual train by which they give fire to all public disorder and confusion. When therefore a man engages in a faction, he doth in effect prostitute his understanding to all the cheats and delusions that busy and contriving knaves can impose on it. For having once wedded his affections to the interest of the faction, they will quickly bribe his understanding into a belief of every thing that favours it: and let the opinion or the story be never so improbable, it will find an easy access to such minds as are already fed by their affections to entertain it; and provided it be but serviceable to the party he is engaged in, that will prevail with his understanding against a thousand good reasons to the contrary. Let him but hear his prince reproached with never such wild and improbable stories, he shakes his head, and swallows all for gospel. Tell him, that the king is deeply engaged in a plot against his own life, and crown, and dignity; alas! what a dismal story is this, that a man should thus fall out with himself, and dote upon his own ruin! But though his faith thus glibly swallows camels on one side, yet it is strange to see how it will strain at a gnat on the other. For tell him, on the other side, with never so much evidence and demonstration, that the traitorous design he talks of is hatching under the wings

of his own faction; and though you shew him the very association and band of the bloody conspiracy, upon the principles whereof they have murdered one king already, and so may reasonably be presumed to be acting the tragedy of another, especially when they act the same things over again, scene after scene, so exactly in the same garb, and plot, and language, that had one, who died forty years ago, arose from his grave but two or three years since, he would doubtless have concluded that forty-two was not yet expired; yea, though you produce a fresh conspiracy, proved upon the party by undeniable evidence, and even by the free confessions of the dying conspirators themselves; yet it is next to impossible to persuade him that ever such wise men should be so mad, or such good men so wicked, as to engage in such a desperate villainy. But I need not tell you, who have seen the transactions of these last six years, how many fulsome lies have been confidently believed, and notorious truths dashed out of countenance, through blind partiality to a faction. And indeed, when once a man is engaged in a faction, it is thenceforth impossible for him to judge impartially of things; because now his faith must see through his affections, and his affections must follow the interest of his party; and if that be engaged in ill designs, it will need ill principles to countenance it; and his affections being preengaged to the interest of the faction, will easily bribe his understanding to assent to any principles that are needful to support it. Wherefore, if you have any reverence for your own understandings, if you would not be played upon by impostures and deceivers, and choused, and abused, and led by the nose through all the wild

mazes of folly and falsehood, *meddle not with those that are given to change.*

Secondly, By engaging ourselves in factions against the government, we shall in all probability insensibly contract the most black and diabolical affections. For this is the natural process of all faction; it begins in pride and self-conceit, in an arrogant presumption that we are much wiser than those above us, and fitter to rule and govern; and then having once entertained this overweening opinion of ourselves, we look upon all that are superior to us with envious and malignant eyes, and think ourselves highly injured and affronted, that we are not placed at the upper end of the world; and then, from envying we proceed to hating our governors, and from hating them, to impatience of their government: to ease ourselves of which, we soon imbody into factions, where we whet our malice and arrogance upon one another, by applauding each other in censuring those above, in running spiteful descants on their actions, and arraigning their mal-administration at the tribunal of our majesty; than which there is nothing can more effectually humour and gratify our vanity. For what a glorious thing is it for a little shopkeeper or mechanic to perk up a mighty politician, and sit in judgment on his governors, to expose the folly of their conduct, and find out the soft places of their ministers of state! How much greater and more magnificent is this, than to be dull and stay at home and mind one's own business! And when by thus humouring our pride we have blown it up into insolence, this swells our envy, and that inflames our malice against all that are above us or opposite to us: for by this time our mind is so bloated,

that we cannot bear the least contradiction, but are ready to run down with clamour and hard names every thing that thwarts our imperious dictates; and in matters of religion, every thing is popery that agrees not with the model of our reformation; and in matters of state, every thing tyranny that opposes the platform of our government: and unless all things be framed according to our humour, and bend to the dictates of our oraculous pride, heaven and earth will come together, the gospel, and liberty, and property will vanish, and the whole frame of things sink into confusion. And while we thus make our pride and self-conceit the standard of the world, and expect that all things should comply with and truckle to it, we shall be so impatient of contradiction, that it will be little better than treason or blasphemy to oppose us: so that whosoever presumes to give check to our insolence is sure to be made the mark of our malice, and to be persecuted with all the reproach and opprobrium that the most inveterate rancour can invent. Thus faction, you see, is impregnated with the very nature of the Devil; and carries in it all the pride and envy, rancour and malice, that sunk down the angels of light from heaven, and converted them into fiends and furies. Wherefore, as you would not expose your natures to spoil and ravage, to be overspread with the most poisonous affections, and drowned in the passions of hell, *meddle not with those that are given to change.*

Thirdly, By engaging ourselves in factions against the government, we shall be mightily tempted to neglect the great and necessary things of religion: for generally, the foundations of all factions against government are laid in little disputes about matters

of religion, which are usually started by the leaders of the faction, for no other end but to engage the honest zeal of the people against the established religion, that thereby they may engage them against the established government. And could they but make them as zealous for the mass as for the Directory, it would be all one to them which of the two they advanced against the public establishment; their design in these hot disputes about religion being only to lay a train to blow up the government: and since the zeal of the people is the tool they must work with, it is their interest to sharpen it, and render it as keen and active as may be. So that when once you have engaged yourselves in their faction, to be sure they will employ their utmost endeavours to bigot your minds to their opinion, and to engage all your zeal for the little modes and circumstances they contend for: they will so represent the matter to you, as if the life and substance of religion were in dispute; as if God, and Jesus Christ, and the gospel, were all at stake upon the controversy, and your souls were to sink or swim with their opinions: and your zeal being engaged by these arts for the trifling opinions of your party, you will by degrees grow remiss, and neglective of the great and weighty things of religion. For the mind of man being finite in all its acts, can never operate divers ways at once with equal force and vigour; but whatsoever time and attention we bestow upon one thing, we must necessarily substract from another; and so by degrees, as we grow more and more zealous for the little modes and opinions of our party, we shall grow more and more remiss in the main and necessary duties of religion, till at last we degenerate into

perfect lukewarmness: and accordingly, how many are there among ourselves, the very spirit of whose religion is evaporated into a noisy, busy, and blustering zeal for parties, who are wondrous nice and scrupulous about the rites and ceremonies of religion; and yet can swallow lies, perjuries, treasons, and rebellions, without the least straining or remorse! O did but these men love God and their neighbours, in the same proportion as they do a conventicle; did they but hate impiety and immorality but half so much as they do bishops and liturgies, what excellent Christians would they be! But, alas! their zeal is swallowed up in their faction; the current is diverted out of those proper channels of piety and virtue, into the little wranglings of their party, where it flows headlong, and makes a clamorous noise to no other purpose but to disturb the world. Wherefore, as you would not be tempted into a gross neglect of the substantials of religion, to convert your piety and virtue into bigotry and stickling for parties, *meddle not with those that are given to change.*

Fourthly, By engaging ourselves in factions against the government, we shall in all probability insensibly involve ourselves in indirect courses, and be trained on from one evil to another, in the most flagitious villainies. When first men list themselves into parties, their designs perhaps are fair and innocent: they are told, that their religion, their liberties, and properties are in danger; and finding such a party of men set up for forward and zealous assertors of them, they mingle with them, with no other intent but to concur with them in all honest and lawful endeavours to preserve and secure those

invaluable blessings. But alas, poor souls! they see where they begin, but God knows where they will end. For now they must move by the measures of the faction, and see with its eyes, and hear with its ears; through which, to be sure, all the actions and designs of their governors will be represented to them in the blackest colours: by which their passions being inflamed with contempt and hatred of them, will soon blaze out at their mouth or pens into seditious talk or factious libels; and then such is the nature of contempt and hatred, that the very venting of them fans and irritates them, till at last they settle into inveterate rancour, and then they are capable of any mischief. For all along as their passion is growing, they mistake it for a pious zeal for God, and religion, and the public good; and under that notion cherish its regular transports; concluding, that nothing can be amiss that proceeds from such a sanctified principle: and so, though they lie, and slander, and backbite, and perjure themselves over and over, yet it is all well; because they do it out of zeal for the glory of God, and the true protestant religion: for when once intemperate zeal gets ahead, it bears down all considerations of reason and religion before it, and hurries it on into the foulest enormities; and then, when once our outrageous zeal hath transported us into illegal and unjustifiable actions, we shall many times be tempted to proceed, through mere despair of a safe retreat, to shelter ourselves from the punishment of one crime by committing another: for so in all factions men do commonly so involve themselves, that when they have done ill, they have no other way to save themselves but by doing worse. Thus, when by

their seditious behaviour they have incensed their governor against them, it is necessary for them to associate; and when they are associated, it is necessary to rebel; and when they have drawn the sword, it is necessary to fling the scabbard to the Devil. For I make no doubt, but many of those wretches that murdered the late king would have trembled at the thought of it when they first engaged in the faction; but their zeal having once transported them into sedition, they had no other way to escape but by rebellion; and being engaged in rebellion, they had no other sanctuary but regicide. As therefore you would not expose your innocence and virtue to these and such like dangerous temptations, *mingle not with such as are given to change.*

Fifthly and lastly, By engaging with factions against the government, we shall, in all probability, entangle ourselves in the greatest temporal mischiefs and calamities: for faction is naturally forward and pragmatical; it fills men's heads with projects and chimeras, with mysteries of state and models of government, and sends their thoughts after the fool's eyes, roving to the ends of the earth, to parliaments and privy councils, and high consultations about affairs of government. And when once their minds are got abroad, their bodies cannot stay long behind; but away they must to some coffeehouse or public refectory, to vent their politics, and advise about affairs of state, discharge their consciences to the public, by directing how things ought to be managed, and shewing where the ministers of state are out, and by what measures they ought to steer the helm of government; and in the mean time, while they are governing abroad, the shop is neglected at home, and

the trade decays, and they and their families sink insensibly into beggary: for though for a very small charge they may sit and govern an hour or two together, yet hereby their time is not only wasted, which is much more precious than their money, but their heads are filled with so many politic whimseys, that when they come home, they cannot mind their business; their shops are grown too little for their minds, and they can neither think nor talk beneath affairs of empire: and when once men are got into this vein, it is time for their creditors, as well as their governors, to look after them: for it is too too much for one man to govern a kingdom and to mind a trade; while he is busy abroad, he must be idle at home; and when his faction hath reduced him to idleness, his idleness will soon bring him to beggary. Of the truth of which, the age we live in affords us too many woful instances of such as have been thrust on by a factious and pragmatical temper to intermeddle with affairs of government; which, by degrees, have so engrossed their thoughts, and cares, and time, and activity, that they could scarce ever be at leisure to attend their own business; and so, like the foolish astronomer, whilst they have been gazing at the stars, and troubling their heads about affairs above them, they have been utterly regardless of their own concerns, and tumbled into a ditch of ruin unawares. But suppose they escape this rock; yet there is another very dangerous one attends them, and that is the law, against which, in all probability, they will one time or other split themselves in pieces: for faction naturally renders men bold and confident of their own understanding; so that if they have but attained some little smattering of law, they make no doubt

but that they fully understand it, and the utmost bounds of it, and how far they may venture without incurring its penalties; and so many times they dance themselves into a noose, and, like silly flies, play about the candle till they have singed their wings in the flame of it. For when out of an ignorant confidence men will venture as far as they imagine they may, it is a thousand to one but they venture farther than they should, and either prate or scribble within the reach of a penalty; or, through their own inconsiderate rashness, are insensibly decoyed into seditious and treasonous conspiracies; where, notwithstanding all engagements of secrecy and hopes of future advancement, their lives and fortunes are at pawn in the hands of their fellow-conspirators; who, being prompted either by drunkenness, or vanity, or fear, or conscience, will, in all probability, one time or other betray them; or, if they do not, yet their cabals may be observed and suspected, their councils may be overheard, or their own guilty looks or affectation of secrecy may discover them, and a thousand other accidents may unfold their dark intrigues, and conclude their mighty hopes in a halter. And, considering that there is an all-seeing Providence that superintends the affairs of the world, and hath a peculiar regard to the safety of princes, it is ten thousand to one against them but that one time or other they are catched in their own snares: for so it follows immediately after my text, *for their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin of them both?* that is, both of those that move the rebellion, and of those that associate with them.

I now proceed to the second thing proposed; which is, to give you some signs and tokens by which you

may distinguish *such as are given to change*, in order to your avoiding them.

One would think indeed, considering our circumstances, it should be needless to warn us of engaging in factions against our government; which is not only in itself the most gentle and easy in the world, but also administered with an unparalleled lenity and goodness, by a most gracious and merciful prince; a prince that hath been endeared to us by most signal favours from heaven, by so many wonders of providence, and strange repeated deliverances, and under whose gracious influence and protection we have hitherto sat quietly under our own vines, whilst all the nations round about have been involved in blood and confusion: so that for us to list ourselves in a faction against him, who hath been the author of so much happiness to us, and this after so many repulses of divine providence, which hath so manifestly stood by him, and owned him for its darling and favourite, would be to fight not only against ourselves and our own happiness, not only against God's express will and visible authority, but against his bare and naked arm too. Notwithstanding all which, it is too too visible how apt we are to be impressed and wrought upon by the seditious arts and insinuations of evil-minded men: wherefore, in such an age as this, wherein even well-meaning men are so often practised on, and their honest zeal is apt to be abused and ridden by a company of mal-contents, it must doubtless be very seasonable to give some signs and tokens to the world, by which those that *are given to change* may be known, and discovered, and avoided. Of these therefore I shall give you the following particulars:

First, When men who have actually changed the government already, begin to re-advance their old principles, methods, and pretences, it is a certain sign they *are given to change*. For either they have repented their subversion of the government, or they have not: if they have, the fruits of it will appear in their future behaviour; they will be more peaceable, and modest, and obedient for the time to come, and keep a greater distance from those seditious arts by which they were inveigled, or did inveigle others, into the past rebellion. But if they have not repented, and do still continue of the same mind, advancing their old principles and pretences, you may be sure they are aiming at their old mark; and it would not be charity, but sottishness, to believe, the gamester who rooked you once before doth not design the same again, when you see him throw the same false dice. When therefore you hear the cry of popery and arbitrary government renewed by a party that have once blown up the throne with it already, you may conclude upon it that they are playing the old game over again. For whatsoever cause there be to dread popery or tyranny, these, of all men, were they truly penitent for what is past, would be the most cautious how they alarmed men's fears and jealousies again, considering what horrid mischiefs they did by their false alarms heretofore. When therefore you see them forward and industrious, and raise to propagate their old clamour afresh, you may without breach of charity conclude, that they are the same men they were, and are driving at the same design.

Secondly, When men make that a pretence for public clamour and bustle, which themselves have

little or no claim to or regard for, it is a certain sign they *are given to change*. For it is not to be imagined that men should be heartily concerned for those things wherein they have no share or interest. Should you hear two persons earnestly contending about the division of the lands in the world in the moon, you would hardly believe they were in earnest; because, whether there be lands there or no, you are sure these men can have no interest in them; and therefore you must either conclude that they are mad, or that whatever they pretend, the foundation of their quarrel lies below the moon. Thus, for instance, when you hear a company of profligate debauchees, that live in open defiance to all religion, raise a clamour for religion, in which they are no more interested or concerned than in those upland countries in the world of the moon, you may be sure the real cause of their clamour is something in which they are more nearly concerned, and that this prètence of religion is only a plausible mask of their covetousness, or revenge, or ambition. And so again, when you hear a company of bankrupts, or stripped sequestrators, raise a cry for freehold and property, against the government, you may depend upon it that this is not the real mark they aim at. For what should make these men so zealous for property, that have nothing of their own to lose? It is a plain case therefore, that they love your properties so well, that they would fain have a share in them; and in order thereunto, they would raise a storm upon the government, that so in a common wreck they may enrich themselves with the division of the spoil, and wrest their old usurpations out of the hand of the rightful possessors. Wherefore, while you live, have

care of intermingling yourselves with atheists and beggars, in their contentions with the government for liberty and property.

Thirdly, When men pretend religion, or public reformation, but pursue it by indirect means, it is a certain token that they *are given to change.* For they who heartily espouse the interest of religion, are enemies to all things that religion is an enemy to: and therefore, if I hate the corruptions of religion for religion's sake, I must hate all sinful ways of reforming it; because those sinful ways are as contrary to religion, as the corruptions I would reform by them. As for example; religion is as great an enemy to lying and rebellion as it is to popery; and therefore, if I truly love religion, I shall be as great an enemy to one as the other. Wherefore, if I see men attempt to reform religion from popery by lying or rebellion, I am sure it is not to serve religion that they do it, but to serve themselves by unhinging the government: for had they the sincere zeal to religion they pretend to, they would be as forward to obey its commands of speaking the truth and submitting to their governors, as they are to comply with its prohibitions of worshipping images and consecrated wafers; because its authority is equally concerned in both: and besides, they would consider, that by using unwarrantable means to purge and defend it, they shall much more prejudice its cause than the best reformation can promote it; and consequently, that it is much more for the true interest of religion to be persecuted by popery, than to be reformed by rebellion. Whereas by using wicked arts to defend it, they only rescue it from one enemy to betray it to another; and to vindicate

its honour from superstition and idolatry, sacrifice it to rebellion and murder. When therefore you find any party of men driving on a pretence of religion or reformation, with lies and perjuries, backbiting and slanders, tumults and insurrections, as you tender either your virtue or welfare, have nothing to do with them: for you will most certainly find a faction of hypocrites, that only make a show of reforming religion to undermine the government.

Fourthly, When, under a pretence of reforming the government, men reproach and vilify the persons of their governors, and are forward to believe ill, and backward to believe well of them, it is a certain sign that they *are given to change:* for if they design no more than the reformation of some faults or errors in the government, they would only apply themselves to those in whose power it is to correct them; and with all humility endeavour to convince them of, and persuade them to rectify them. But to make it our business to speak ill of them where they cannot hear us, and proclaim and magnify their faults in our common conversation; what other end can this serve, but, first, to arm the passions, and then the hands of the people against them? To what purpose should you tell me a tragical story of the ill actions or designs of my prince? You know very well I am neither his tutor nor his counsellor, and so no way capable to correct or reform him. All that you can effect therefore is, to raise an ill opinion of him in my mind: and what other influence can my ill opinion have, but to prepare me to list myself in any mischievous design against him? When therefore you find men addicted to whisper or proclaim the faults of their governors, to magnify their

faults, and conceal or lessen their good conduct and success; you may depend upon it, that their designs are mischievous, that they rejoice in the faults they exclaim against, and are glad things are so bad, and do heartily wish they were worse, that so they might exclaim against them with the better grace and countenance; that they lament nothing so much, as the wise and good deeds of their governors; and that the worst news they can hear is the prosperity of the public under the happy influence of their government. For how can I delight to emblazon the faults I am sorry for, and do wish were amended? How can I take pleasure in making them worse than they are, did I not wish they were so? Why should I be so forward to believe any ill of them, but that *facile credimus quod volumus?* Why so backward to believe any good, but that we heartily wish there were no cause for it? Wherever therefore you find any persons of this character, avoid them as you would the air of a pesthouse: for assure yourselves, whatever they pretend, it is not reformation of the government they aim at, but the destruction of the governors.

Fifthly, When men shift their principles with their interest, and, to serve a turn, can comply at one time with that which they condemn at another, it is a sure sign they *are given to change.* For if conscience be the motive of our noncompliance with the government, those reasons which sway us when it is for our interest, will as well sway us when it is against it; because our conscience is nothing but the reason of our mind directing us what to do and what to avoid: and though outward changes may alter our interest, yet it is only better reason that can alter our reason;

and whether it be better, or no, is not to be determined by mutable interests, but by scripture, or the immutable natures of things. When therefore you see any party of men, that dissent from the government, shift their principles and practices, according to the variable exigencies of their affairs; conform to-day, and nonconform to-morrow; go to church and receive the sacrament, to avoid a penalty or qualify themselves for an office, and when that turn is served, revolt to a conventicle, and pretend conscience against our worship and ceremonies; when you hear them curse toleration, whilst themselves are in the saddle, and as soon as they are dismounted, declaim for liberty of conscience; cry up the prerogatives of the crown while it indulges, and cry them down again as soon as it restrains them: in a word, when you hear them bitterly exclaiming against equivocation, rebellion, and treason in a papist, and yet practise it themselves upon popish principles, when their own cause and interest invites them; when, I say, you see these or any such like shiftings and doublings in any party dissenting from the government, you may certainly conclude, that it is not their conscience sways, but their faction.

Sixthly and lastly, When men who in the ordinary course of their conversation are proud and quarrelsome, and impatient of contradiction, set up pretences of religion against the government, it is a certain sign that they *are given to change:* for a great part of that which men call religion is nothing but the workings of their natural temper into such principles and practices as are most suitable to it. Thus, the Pharisees, for instance, were men of a very

haughty, sour, pragmatical, and untractable nature; and this temper of theirs wrought itself by degrees into a suitable religion: for so their pride issued into affectation of singularity, and that into those distinguishing garbs, and rites, and gestures which were the badges of their faction: so their austerity and sourness discharged itself in long prayers, frequent fasts, and unnecessary severities; and that into an uncharitable opinion of every one that prayed not as long and fasted not as often as they; and this into a sullen separation from their neighbours, both in civil and sacred society: and, in a word, so their surliness and untractable humour worked out into a factious scrupulosity about matters of civil obedience, and that into seditions, and sometimes open rebellions, upon slight and trifling occasions. And when upon such principles as were most agreeable to their own ill nature, they had formed themselves into a sect, all the ill-natured people, both in town and country, were easily converted to it; and some good people too, perhaps, were so far imposed on by the mighty show it made of zeal and sanctity, as to imbody with it; the candour of their natures not permitting them to suspect a rotten core under so fair an outside; till at length, being poisoned themselves by the ill principles of the party, they became as ill-natured as the rest of their brethren; and so as ill nature begot the ill principles in some, so the ill principles begot ill nature in others. So that though this pharisaical religion made a mighty show, and looked with a most demure and sanctified countenance; yet it is plain that the only foundation of it was baseness and ill nature. And since thus it hath been, thus

it may be again: for in all dissenting religions, such as the Pharisees' was, there is something very grateful to proud and untractable natures.

It is a mighty gratification to our pride to dissent and be singular in our opinion and practices, because it looks as if we were wiser than the rest of the world; it wonderfully tickles a crossgrained, surly nature to be opposite in opinion to that which is uppermost: and therefore, before you side with any party that advances a pretence of religion against the government, it concerns you strictly to observe, whether in their ordinary conversation they were modest and gentle, humble, and easy to be entreated; and if so, you may justly conclude, that their religion, whether it be true or false, is founded in their reason and conscience. But if, on the contrary, you perceive in them a fierce, proud, froward, and inflexible nature; if in their ordinary converses they are cross and unsociable; if they affect contention in the neighbourhoods and societies wherein they are engaged, and are hot and impatient of contradiction; you may, without breach of charity, conclude, that their dissent proceeds not so much from the convictions of their reason, as from the pride and crossness of their humour. And therefore, wherever you find such as these contending with the government, as you would not be made the tools of their perverseness, stand off, and have nothing to do with them: for when men have the seeds of sedition in their natures, they are thereby inclined to entertain dissents from the established religion, merely because those dissents are opposite to the government: and though, if the principles of their dissent are ill, they will the more inflame their ill nature against the govern-

ment; yet their ill nature, which tempted them to espouse those principles, would have rendered them untractable to the government, whether they had espoused them or no. And thus, with all plainness and integrity, I have endeavoured to characterize those that *are given to change*, that so honest men may know them when they see them, and avoid them. And if herein I have reflected upon any ill men, or ill party of men, it was with no other design but to warn others from intermingling with them: and surely, to admonish men of a danger that threatens ruin both to their souls and bodies, and shew them the way to peace, security, and happiness, is such a friendly office as can give offence to none, but such as are resolved never to be honester or wiser. I confess, of all the offices that belong to a preacher, I am naturally the most averse to that of reprehension; I do not love to expose men's faults, to probe and rake into their sores; and it is not only my charity to mankind, but the indisposition of my nature to find fault, that makes me wish that all men were so good as to need no reprehension, that so we might have nothing to do but to praise and encourage them, to excite them to go on with the comforts of religion and the just applauses of well-doing. But, alas! we live in an age would make a stone speak, and force any honest man, in despite of all the candour and modesty of his nature, to cry aloud against the fulsome hypocrisies and impostures that look through our most glorious pretences to religion: for what a nauseous shame is it, to see men set up for reformers, and disturb a wise and excellent establishment with endless scruples about indifferent things; whose consciences, as they call them,

are as tender as their eyes on one side, and yet as hard as their foreheads on the other; cannot endure the weight of an innocent ceremony when their obedience is required, and yet, to serve the interest of a faction, can dance under loads of perjury and treason! And yet, God help us! such as these have been the captains of all our factions against the government; men of ill lives and atheistical principles, that pretend to grace without morality, and to religion without believing in God; and yet make a mighty noise against the government for true religion, pure ordinances, and a thorough reformation; and therewithal have drawn in our discontented sects into their party, and listed them volunteers to their revenge and ambition. And indeed, while men live in dissent from the established religion, it is impossible but their minds should be in some measure prejudiced against the government; especially if they are restrained from propagating their dissents, as they must expect to be under all wise governments. For, to be sure, this restriction will be accounted by them an injurious persecution, and it will be hard for them to refrain hating their governors, whilst they look upon them as their persecutors; and when once their passions are armed against the government, they are half-way onwards to an open rebellion: and it will be an easy matter for any cashiered grandee or politic demagogue, that has but wit enough to chafe their discontents, and credit enough to head their cause, to form them into a resolute faction against the government: so that it will be impossible either for the government to be safe, or for us to be secure from the mischiefs of faction, whilst we affect to dissent from the established religion. And therefore it

concerns every dissenter, as he values his own safety and innocence, to use all honest ways to satisfy his conscience in the communion of the established church; where he will not only be secured from those disaffections to the government which he is liable to whilst he continues in any discountenanced sect, but also instituted in such firm principles of loyalty, as, if he follows, will for ever secure him from engaging in factions: for this is the doctrine of our church, expressed in the homily of Obedience; "We may not in any wise withstand violently or "rebel against the rulers, or make any insurrection, "sedition, or tumult, either by force of arms or "otherwise, against the anointed of the Lord or any "of his officers: but we must in such case" (that is, when we are commanded unlawful things) "patient-"ly suffer all wrongs and injuries, referring the "judgment of our case to God." And in this, as well as in her other doctrines, her government, and discipline, our church doth exactly copy after the primitive Christianity. If therefore we believe this doctrine, our consciences will never consent to our listing ourselves against the government; but if, instead of believing it, we openly contradict and oppose it, as all those do who pretend religion for their faction, we are so far dissenters from the church of England. For conformity to a church consists not merely in frequenting its prayers, and sermons, and sacraments, and complying with its rites and discipline, but also in believing its doctrines, or, at least, not openly opposing and contradicting them: but whosoever sides with a faction against the government, upon pretence of religion, doth thereby openly renounce the doctrine of our church, and becomes a

confessed nonconformist, how conformable soever he may be in other particulars. So that, though there are too many men, who, to credit their ill designs against the government, shelter themselves under the wings of the church; yet it is evident, they are either nonconformists to the church, or conformists that act against their own principle; which is such a fault as no church can prevent, so long as there is such a thing as free-will in the world. Wherefore, as you would preserve yourselves from those manifold mischiefs that faction draws after it, do not found your loyalty upon humour, or fashion, or interest, which are fickle and variable things; but upon the religious principles of the church whereof you are members; which will keep us steadfast and immovable amidst all the mutabilities of the world: for whilst you have no principles to lead you, and you reserve yourselves to follow fortune and the turns of outward affairs, you will be shifting yourselves upon every change, and, in a very unscriptural sense, *putting off the old man and putting on the new.* And whilst you thus transform yourselves into a thousand several shapes, as you run through the still changing fashions of the world, besides that it will expose you of all sides to the odious character of turncoats and renegadoes, that are constant to nothing, and to the bosom satires and secret upbraidings of your own consciences; besides this, I say, it will eternally perplex and entangle your lives. For upon every new alteration of affairs, you must act a new part, and put on a new garb of conversation: and whilst you thus shift sides upon every turn, newshape your humours, and jump from one extreme to another, you will be always doing violence to your

natures, because you will act no part long enough to render any natural and easy to you. So that, when all is done, the easiest way of living is to live honestly; that is, to set down honest principles in our minds, and then resolve to follow them through all events: so shall we live consistently with ourselves; and, whatsoever happens from without, be always the same, and in all conditions still know where to find ourselves; because we shall always act upon the same principles, and so there will be no cross deliberations in our minds, no mazes or intrigues in our lives, no by-ways of actions upon new emergencies; but whatsoever happen, we shall still be going on through the same path towards the same end; and, whatsoever befalls us from without, whether it rains or shines, proves calm or tempestuous, we shall never be at a loss how to behave ourselves; but our principles will still chalk us out the way we are to walk in. And though in following them we may sometimes endanger our worldly interest, and fall under the disgrace of a rabble, and the persecutions of a prevailing faction, yet our very enemies will be forced to revere and honour us, to acknowledge that we are constant and brave, honest and resigned to our own principles; and, which is better than that, we shall revere ourselves, and be supported under our sufferings with the applauses of our conscience and the hopes of a glorious immortality; which will render our condition not only tolerable in itself, but much more desirable than the crowns and triumphs of prosperous hypocrites: and, which is best of all, God himself will honour us before angels and saints, and plead our cause, and vindicate our innocence, and reward our sufferings for righteousness' sake. Thus, by

pursuing the honest principles of our religion we shall be inviolably secured against all the mischiefs of faction, and immovably confirmed in our loyalty both to God and the king; which in all probability will render our lives secure and easy in this world, but, to be sure, everlastingly happy in the world to come.

SERMON V.

PREACHED BEFORE

THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR AND COURT OF ALDERMEN, AT ST. MARY LE BOW, JULY 26, 1685.

2 SAMUEL xviii. 28.

And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lift up their hand against my lord the king.

THIS Ahimaaz was a soldier under Joab, in the battle which he fought with Absalom, the rebellious son of his too kind and indulgent father, king David; who, having newly pardoned him that unnatural murder of his brother Amnon, and received him into grace and favour, and furnished him with a plentiful revenue and a splendid equipage; so that, if he had pleased, he might have lived in peace and glory, and been a comfort to his father, a patriot to his country, and a blessing to his family; and after he had finished the circle of a happy and prosperous life, might have gone down with honour to his grave: the foolish, ungrateful young man, being thereto excited partly perhaps by the insinuations of a company of crafty malecontents, but chiefly by his own ambition, embarks himself in a wicked and desperate design against his father's life and crown: in order whereunto he industriously sets himself, by mean and poor conde-

scensions, to cajole and inveigle the rude and giddy *mobile;* which, partly by declaiming against the mal-administrations of his father's government, partly by promising them a thorough reformation, if ever he arrived to be a judge in Israel, he at length accomplished. And now, having formed to himself a strong and numerous party, he gets his father's leave to make a progress to Hebron, (a factious town, without doubt, and it lay westward of Jerusalem,) under pretence of paying a vow there; for so religion is the usual sham of rebellion: where being arrived with two hundred men out of Jerusalem, who followed him blindfold, without either fear or wit, he sends for one Ahithophel, who had been a counsellor to his father; but at this time, as it seems probable, was discarded the court for some high misdemeanour. This cankered old wretch, glad of the opportunity to revenge himself upon his master, immediately joins interests with his undutiful son, and thereby increases his party into a strong and numerous army, with which he marches against his king and father, and is overthrown in a pitched battle; and notwithstanding his father's orders to the contrary, is slain by the hand of Joab, who wisely foresaw that David could never hope to reign in peace, so long as the rebel Absalom was alive. Hereupon Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, a valiant soldier, and swift and nimble footman, desires Joab, his general, that he may be the messenger of the good tidings to the king: but Joab having a kindness for the man, and wisely considering that the news of Absalom's death would be very unwelcome to David, and in all probability transport him into a high displeasure, and so prove fatal to the deliverer, at first refuses to let him go, and in

his room sends Cushi, who was either a common or a foreign soldier; but Ahimaaz, upon his importunate desire, at length obtains of Joab leave to follow him; and being much the nimbler, outruns Cushi; and being arrived into the king's presence, cries, *All is well*, being unable, either through excess of joy or want of breath, to express his message at large: after which, having recovered himself a little, he throws himself at the king's feet, and in a transport of joy and thanksgiving, thus expresses himself, *Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men, that lift up their hand against my lord the king.*

In choosing which words for my text upon this joyful occasion, God knows, I have no design to insult and trample on the memory of that wofully misled and unfortunate gentleman, who was captain of that late black rebellion, the happy overthrow and conclusion of which we are now thankfully commemorating. For though it cannot be denied, but that his unnatural and undutiful behaviour to his late most gracious father and sovereign did but too justly entitle him to the name and character of Absalom; and that his rebellion against, infidelity to, and barbarous aspersions of his present majesty, who was always his generous patron and benefactor, do but too deservedly brand him the perfidious and ungrateful Absalom; yet, considering the relation he bore to our late dear sovereign of ever blessed memory, the promising blossom of his youth, before it was blasted with wild and boundless ambition, and the glorious sphere in which he once moved; where, had he not aspired to the seat of the sun, he might have shone among stars of the first magnitude, and shed forth a

benign influence upon his country and family: considering these things, I say, I am so far from triumphing on his ruin, that I heartily lament and bewail his being seduced into the crimes that were the cause of it, and detest those cursed Ahithophels that seduced him, only to make him the tool of their own dire revenge and restless ambition: and, if God so please, may that same justice that hath reached him lay hands on them, and by a yet more infamous punishment revenge his sin and ruin on their heads. And since his memory cannot live with honour, I heartily wish it might die in oblivion; that so, having paid that debt which law, and justice, and the necessary reasons of things exacted of him, it might never hereafter be remembered against him, how desperately he broke through all the ties of nature, honour, gratitude, and religion, to precipitate himself into a shameful and untimely fate. But this being only a hopeless wish, I shall, in pity to his memory, forbear running the odious parallel between Absalom and him, through all the black circumstances of their sin and punishment; having said enough already, and yet no more than what was necessary, to explain the suitableness of the text to the occasion, *Blessed be the Lord thy God who hath delivered up the men that lift up their hand against my lord the king*. In which words are two things observable.

First, The great concern and interest God hath in the overthrow of rebels; it is he that *delivers them up*.

Secondly, The great cause we have to return thanks to God when he *delivers them up*.

I shall begin with the first of these, viz. the great concern and interest God hath in the overthrow of

rebels; it is he who *delivers them up.* It is true, the success of war, on which side soever it lights, depends upon the divine providence; which having the disposal of all events, whether they be adverse or prosperous, turns the scale of victory on which side it pleases: for the second causes upon which success and victory ordinarily depend, is the good conduct of those who command, and the strength, and courage, and expertness of those who execute; all which are under the command and sovereign disposal of God; who, if he pleases, can infatuate the wisest and most skilful commanders, blindfold their judgments, confound their reason, and turn their wisdom into folly; so they shall run quite counter to their own designs, and blow up themselves with their own trains; who, if he doth not infatuate them, can yet frustrate their wisdom, and by a thousand accidents, which they can neither foresee nor prevent, baffle and defeat their most prudent and promising designs; who, if he pleases, can divide and break the strength of the most numerous, dissolve and confound the order of the most disciplined, melt and emasculate the courage of the most resolute armies; and having the sovereign disposal of all the second causes of success in his hands, it is he alone that can decide the battle, and determine the hovering victory to which side he pleases; so that whether it lights on the right or wrong side, on the usurping rebels or lawful prince's crest, it is by his all-disposing direction and appointment: for though *the horse is prepared for battle,* and secondary causes concur as means and instruments, *yet victory is of the Lord,* Prov. xxi. 31. And though sometimes, for wise and righteous ends, he permits unjust arms to prosper and tri-

umph over a righteous cause, of which we have a woful instance in our memory; yet ordinarily and regularly he declares on the righteous side, and awards success according to the justice of the cause. For battle is an appeal to God, in which the contending parties join issue to put their case in his hands, and refer the justice of their cause to his award and determination; and being hereby constituted the sole arbitrator between them, he ordinarily decides the victory according to the right of the case; and, unless there be some very great reason moving him to the contrary, awards it to the juster side. They therefore who make an unjust war, appeal to God in a wrong cause; and therefore have all the reason in the world to expect that he will decide against them, and finally award the victory to their enemies.

It is true, God is not obliged in justice always to determine the victory to the just cause: for there may be just reasons, and many times there are, moving him to the quite contrary. Sometimes it may be more for the public good, of which he is the great conservator, that this particular righteous cause should miscarry, than that it should prosper and succeed; in which case, it is but reasonable that he should rather permit a particular mischief, than hinder a public convenience. Sometimes a good cause may be more effectually advanced by a present overthrow than by a victory; and when this happens, it is a good reason why God should at present pronounce the sentence of victory on the contrary side. Sometimes it may be necessary to deny success to those who have the righteous cause on their side, in order to the crowning it with some greater blessing;

and in taking away a less good, to make room for a greater, is such an exchange, as is far from robbery.

And lastly, Sometimes for the sins of those on the right side, which may be such as do render it not only fit, but necessary, for God to make them examples to the world of his righteous severity. And what greater severity can he express, than to abandon a good cause, and rather permit it to fall to the ground, than see it upheld and supported by impious and profane hands? But though there are these and sundry other just reasons, why God should not always award success and victory to the right side, yet doubtless he ordinarily doth so: for all war is between one prince and nation, and another, or else between princes and rebellious subjects. Now as for the first, it is in most cases impossible for us certainly to determine which of the two parties hath the rightful cause, because we do not understand the pretensions on both sides, nor are we capable of judging of those nice reasons and intricate circumstances upon which their opposite claims depend: and therefore, though we, through our pity and ignorance together, do commonly pronounce the vanquished cause best, and upon that account do foolishly murmur at the the decisions of Providence, as if they were unjust and unequal; yet God, who sees through all the circumstances of things, doth many times most certainly know the contrary, and so determines the case contrary to our blind pity and ignorance, according to his own infallible judgment: and had we but the understanding of God, I make no doubt but we should find many of those prosperous causes which we condemn for unjust, to be most just and righteous, and be fully satisfied that the awards of Provi-

dence in the case are much more equal than we imagine. But then, as for the other sort of war, viz. that between princes and their rebellious subjects, it is evident that Providence doth much more constantly decide the success to the just and righteous cause, and give judgment on the side of the injured prince, against the rebellious and usurping subject. For if you consult history, you will find, that though for just and righteous ends God hath sometimes permitted rebellions to succeed, yet, where he hath prospered one, he hath usually cursed and blasted twenty. And indeed, since war, as was before observed, is an appeal to God, the great arbitrator of all events, there are peculiar reasons why he should more constantly declare himself for the right side in a rebellious war, than in any other.

First, Because rebellion is an appeal to him in a cause that is plainly and apparently unjust.

Secondly, Because it is an appeal to him in a cause that very nearly touches and affects his own authority.

Thirdly, Because it is an appeal to him, in a cause that is of all others most destructive of human society.

First, Because rebellion is an appeal to God in a cause that is plainly and apparently unjust: for in those wars that are between princes and princes, the right or wrong of the case is many times not easily decidable; the *meums* and *tuums* of princes and nations being very often so blended and confounded by conquests, leagues, and intermarriages, and revolutions of empire, that it is not only difficult, but sometimes impossible to determine on which side the right lies: and though the contending princes may in most cases perhaps be able to inform them-

selves, whether the cause they contend for be right or wrong, yet the people can be no competent judges of it, but are obliged to acquiesce in their prince's judgment, and to follow them with an implicit faith: so that if they are in the wrong, it is through invincible ignorance, which renders their case extremely pitiable, and excusable before the just and righteous tribunal of God. And therefore, though he most perfectly understands on which side the right lies, be the case never so perplexed or intricate, yet his compassion to their mistaken innocence may, in concurrence with other reasons, especially when their enemies' sins do outvie the justice of their cause, sometimes prevail with him to give judgment of victory on their side. But as for rebellion, the injustice of it is far more visible and apparent; every man knows, or might easily know, if he were not extremely wanting to himself, that his king is the vicegerent of his God; and that being so, he is indispensably obliged, by all the ties of reason and religion, to submit to his will, and reverence his person, and bow to his authority; and that he cannot lift up his hand against him without fighting against God himself; the truth of which is as obvious to our natural reason, and as plainly asserted in holy scripture, as of any proposition in religion: so that I dare boldly affirm, a man may find as fair pretexts for any vice whatsoever, even for drunkenness, whoredom, or perjury, as ever were made for rebellion. And were I to set up for a public patron of wickedness, I hardly know a villainy in nature so black and monstrous, which I could not more plausibly recommend to men's reason and consciences, than this of resistance against lawful authority; which is such a complica-

tion of villainies, such a loathsome mixture of hellish ingredients, as is enough to nauseate any conscience but a devil's. And though conscience and religion are the colours it usually marches under, yet is the imposture of this pretence so fulsome and barefaced, that no man in his wits can be innocently abused by it. For certainly that man must have a great mind to rebel, his will must have a strong bias of pride or discontent, faction or ambition in it, that, in despite of all the evidence from reason and scripture to the contrary, can persuade himself that it is lawful for him, and much less that it is his duty, to lift up his hand against his sovereign. And therefore, for men to appeal to God in a cause so apparently wicked, is not submissively to refer themselves to him, but openly to mock and affront him. Were the case obscure and difficult, though it were unjust, it were excusable, and might fairly admit of a reference to the righteous arbitration of God: but to make a vexatious appeal to his judgment again, in a case which he hath so often and so expressly judged already, is a common barratry; it is not to consult, but to tempt him; and, under pretence of submitting to his determination, openly to defy his authority: in effect, it is to appeal from his will to his providence, and to bespeak him to declare himself against his own declaration. In this case therefore, where the injustice of the cause is so apparent, and consequently the appeal to him about it is so profane and insolent, God is more peculiarly concerned, as sovereign arbitrator, to award for the right side, by delivering up the rebel as a sacrifice to the just revenge of his injured prince.

Secondly, Rebellion is an appeal to God in a cause

wherein his own authority is very nearly touched and affected, in wars between princes and nations. The unjust side indeed offends against his authority by refusing to submit to the laws of justice, and consequently are accountable to him for high undutifulness and disobedience, which is no more than the common case of all wilful offenders against the laws of heaven: but in the case of rebellion, there is not only a peremptory disobedience to those laws of God, which require our dutiful submission to our lawful superiors, but also a direct renunciation of the divine authority itself: for all sovereign power is immediately founded in the dominion of God; who being the supreme Lord of the world, no person can have right to govern in his kingdom under him but by commission from him: for every supreme authority is the head and fountain of all other authorities, so far as it extends; and if it be not so, it cannot be supreme. So that unless all authority be derived from God, he can have no such thing as supreme authority in the world; and if it be all derived from him, then all those persons who are vested with supreme authority under him, must derive and hold it immediately from him; and if they hold it immediately from him, they can be accountable for the exercise of it to none but him: and if so, then for any of their subjects to presume to call them to account by a public formed resistance, is to arraign God's own authority, and invade his peculiar; it is to thrust him out of his throne and set themselves down in it, and there to summon his authority before them, and require it to submit its awful head to their impious doom and sentence. For since in their several dominions all sovereign powers are next to

and immediately under God, it is by his commission alone that they act, and therefore to his tribunal alone that they are accountable. So that by resisting them, we do as directly resist God, whose deputy-governors they are, as a Neapolitan doth the king of Spain, by levying arms against his viceroy of Naples; and by refusing to obey their just and lawful commands, we demur to God's authority, who in every just thing they impose or require, speaks to us by their mouths, and commands us by their law; for so the scripture tells us, not only that *they are ordained of God*, and that too *to resist them is to resist the ordinance of God;* not only that they are *the ministers of God*, and that therefore *for conscience sake*, or in reverence to his authority, which they bear, they are to be *obeyed*, Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. but also that *they judge for God, and not for men*, 2 Chron. xix. 6. and that therefore *their judgment is God's*, Deut. i. 17. Whilst therefore we behave ourselves factiously and rebelliously towards those whom God hath set over us, we live as outlaws in the kingdom of God, without any respect to that visible authority by which he governs the world. And if this be so, then for subjects to rebel against their prince, is neither better nor worse than to appeal to God against his own authority, and to put this impious case to him, Whether it be he or they that have the right of governing the world: for this is the natural language of every rebellious appeal to God; "Lord, we refer it to thee, whether it be not "just and lawful for us to take up arms against "thee, to renounce and cast off thy dominion over "us, and fly in the face of that visible authority by "which thou art pleased to rule and govern us.

"Judge now, we beseech thee, between thyself and "us; let the event decide the right of the case; and "do thou prosper and succeed us in this our un-"dertaking, according to the justice and righteous-"ness of our cause."

When therefore his own authority is thus nearly touched, by an appeal so impious and audacious, it is high time for him, unless some mighty reason intervene to the contrary, to stir up his strength and bare his arm in the vindication of his injured right and affronted authority; and by delivering up the insolent rebel to condign punishment, to assert and maintain his dominion over the world.

Thirdly and lastly, Rebellion is an appeal to God in a cause that is of all others the most destructive of human society: which is another peculiar reason why God should decide against it, rather than against any other unjust war whatsoever. For God being the sovereign head of human society, we may be sure that the principal end of his government is the public good; that being infinitely happy within himself, and from the immense perfections of his own nature, he can have no self-ends to serve in ruling and governing the world; but that his great design is to bless his subjects, and, by diffusing his goodness through the world, to make them all partakers of his happiness. And if it be so, then we may certainly depend upon it, that as those things and actions are most grateful to him which are most beneficial, so those are most odious and offensive to him which are most prejudicial to the world. Now there is no one thing whatsoever that is more beneficial to the world than government, which is the soul of human society, by which it exists and operates, without

which it must inevitably dissolve, and its united parts immediately disband and fly in pieces. For an ungoverned society of men is no better than a herd of wolves and tigers, whose cross interests, inconsistent humours, extravagant passions and affections, are perpetually prompting them to tear and worry one another; by reason of which it is impossible for them to live together with any comfort or security; but either they must submit their passions to be restrained by law, and their interests to be balanced and adjusted by government, or withdraw themselves, like other beasts of prey, into dens and secret retirements, and there live poor and solitary, as bats and owls do, and subsist, like vermin, by robbing and filching from one another.

Since therefore government is so indispensably necessary for the commonweal of men, to be sure God, who is supreme Lord of all, and the great end of whose government is the good of the whole, must have a very tender respect and regard for it, and an implacable aversion to every thing that is destructive to it. Now it is certain, there is nothing so destructive to government as rebellion: for as for wars between prince and prince, and nation and nation, they are indeed the plagues and scourges of nations: whereas rebellion carries the same slaughters and devastations with it; and besides that, it strikes at the very foundations of government. For though the design of the leaders of rebellion is not to destroy government, but to usurp and ravish it out of the hands of the lawful possessors, yet their practice tends directly to the destruction of it. For whenever subjects levy arms against their sovereign, they actually throw off the yoke of his government; and

if they may throw off his, they may for the same reason throw off another's, till at last they have thrown off all, and utterly dissolve themselves into a wild tumult and confusion: which being once admitted, government can have no foundation to rest on but the humour and caprice of a wild multitude, that is, to be governed no otherwise and no longer than it pleases. And how is it possible for any frame of government whatsoever to subsist upon such fickle and mutable principles? So that when subjects rebel against their sovereign, they appeal to God against the very being of government itself, which is the life and soul of all human society; and do in effect desire him finally to determine by the issue and event of things, whether it be just and reasonable that they should be ruled and governed. When therefore the point they contend for is so apparently destructive to human society, of which he himself is the supreme head and sovereign, and the final decision of it is referred to his arbitration, we have all the reason in the world to presume, that he who is *the God of order, and not of confusion*, will, without some mighty inducement to the contrary, damn the rebels' cause, and award success and victory to the government.

Since therefore there are so many peculiar reasons why the Lord of hosts, the mighty God of war, should arm his almighty power against the rebellious, this ought to caution us not to engage in any factious, disloyal, or rebellious design against our prince and government; because in so doing we take the most effectual course that it is possible for men to do, to oblige the almighty providence of heaven to fight against us. For there is no one sin in the black

catalogue of the works of darkness, which God is more concerned to punish in this life, than this of treason and rebellion. And accordingly, if you consult those monuments of divine vengeance, which are transmitted to us both in sacred and profane history, you will find that there are none of any sort so numerous and remarkable, as the dire and infamous tragedies of rebels. And though from these no certain conclusion can be made of the fate and issue of all particular rebellions, because there are instances of some that have prospered and succeeded; and particularly of one among ourselves, and in our memory, which, next to the rebellion of the fallen angels, was perhaps the most barbarous and infamous that was ever acted on the stage of nature: yet this I am certain of, that were it my design to draw down some exemplary judgment on my own head, and even to entail the vengeance of heaven upon myself and my posterity, I could not propose to myself a more probable and effectual way than rebellion; which, of all the crimes and villainies that have ever been perpetrated, either by devils or men, hath ever proved most fatal to the actors of it. Wherefore, as we would not make ourselves the marks of divine vengeance, and expose our guilty heads to its almighty thunderbolts, it concerns us to be mighty careful that we do not swerve from our due allegiance to our prince, that we do not suffer our pride and discontent to prey upon our loyalty, nor imbibe seditious principles, nor intrigue ourselves with factious combinations, which are the seminaries of rebellion: but that, out of an awful fear and dread of God, we honour and obey the king; and avoid, as we

would the air of a plague-sore, *meddling with those that are given to change.*

I now proceed to the second observable in the text, viz. That God's delivering up of rebels is a just ground of praise and thanksgiving to him: for the proof of which, I shall not need to urge any other argument, than the signal defeat and overthrow of this late rebellion, for which we are now rendering our thankful acknowledgments to God. For considering the temper and quality of the persons of which this unnatural rebellion was composed, a very small prophet may easily prognosticate to what a deplorable condition this nation must have been reduced, if it had prospered and succeeded: for it was nothing but a common sewer, into which all the kennels of the nation ran; being partly made up of the most debauched and profligate atheists, that had broke through all the laws of humanity, and stripped themselves so naked of all the show of piety and virtue, that they had not hypocrisy enough remaining to disguise their lewd and villainous intentions; partly of beggarly malecontents, who had no other way to repair their broken fortunes, but by running in to the shipwreck of the nation; but chiefly of hotbrained, furious sectaries, whose blind zeal, like the devil in the possessed man, threw them into fire and water, transported and hurried them into any villainy, into perjury and murder, treason and sacrilege, and would not permit them to stop at any thing that made for the interest of their cause: such were the ingredients of this poisonous mixture. So that had God for our sins permitted it to prevail, we had quickly seen a flourishing kingdom, like Herod in all

his glory and splendour, seized on, eaten up by lice, by a swarm of the basest and most infamous vermin that ever bred out of the filth of a nation: we had seen the atheist glutting his lust with the rapes of our wives and daughters, and quaffing the tears of widows and orphans: we had seen the beggar on horseback, flaunting in the spoils of our fortunes, and triumphing on the heads of our nobles and gentry; and the bloody enthusiast imbruing his hands in loyal blood, appeasing his furious zeal again with royal sacrifice, and throwing down all that is sacred in our Jerusalem, to make way for erecting his fanatic Babel, his tumult and confusion of religions. In a word, we had seen our laws trampled on, our liberties enslaved, and our yet sacred and virgin throne, to our everlasting infamy, defloured and profaned by a spurious illegitimate issue: with this dire spectacle our eyes had most certainly been entertained, had this black rebellion succeeded. Wherefore our gracious God, being moved to commiseration by this woful prospect of our approaching calamity, roused up himself, like a mighty man of war, and with an avengful eye looked down upon this host of Assyrians, and with the breath of his nostrils scattered the rebellious rout before him. *Wherefore, not unto us, O Lord,* not to our conduct or puissance, *but unto thy name be all the glory and honour.* And since we are all of us sharers in this great deliverance, it is just we should all return the tribute of our praise to our great Deliverer. *O give thanks unto the Lord therefore; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth*

for ever. Let all them that fear the Lord, say, that his mercy endureth for ever.

And, as the best return of gratitude we can make to God, let us by our future loyalty to his illustrious vicegerent, by our firm reliance on his royal promises, which hitherto have been ever sacred and inviolate, by our cheerful submission to his laws, and constant forwardness to oppose and detect all treasonous designs against his person and government, endeavour, as much as in us lies, to render his reign safe, and easy, and prosperous: and by our immovable constancy in the profession and practice of our holy religion, the most pure and unsophisticated, the most primitive and loyal religion of the church of England, let us endeavour to endear ourselves to God; that so by our faithful supplications we may prevail with God to fix the crown upon his royal head, to guard and protect his sacred person, to bless and secure his government, to abate the pride, assuage the malice, and confound the devices of his enemies; and after he hath enjoyed a long, a pious, and prosperous reign upon earth, to crown him with everlasting glory in heaven. To which prayer, I am sure, all that are the genuine sons of the church of England will, with a true heart and zealous affection, say, *Amen.*

SERMON VI.

PREACHED

AT THE ASSIZES AT CHELMSFORD IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, AUGUST 31, 1686.

ROMANS xiii. 1.

Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for the powers that are, are ordained of God.

IN which words you have, first, A duty enjoined; *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.* Secondly, A reason enforcing it; *for the powers that are, are ordained of God.* In the duty there are three things considerable. First, The extent of it, it is to *every soul.* Secondly, The matter of it, it is to be *subject.* Thirdly, The object of it, *the higher powers.* Of each of which I shall discourse briefly.

First, Here is the extent of this duty, it is to *every soul;* that is, to every man, of what order, or degree, or quality soever; whether he be high or low, rich or poor, spiritual or secular, none are exempt; without any exception either of St. Peter and his successors, or of the body of the people: for the reason extends equally to both; because *the powers that are, are ordained of God.* They are by God's commission, and rule by his authority: and therefore neither the bishop of Rome, nor the majority of the people, can claim exemption from this duty of subjection, without arrogating to themselves an authority superior to God's. For if we must be subject to them, be-

cause they rule by God's authority, then it is certain there are none that are subject to God but are under the force and obligation of this reason.

But then, secondly, you have here the matter of this duty; and that is, to *be subject:* in which comprehensive phrase is included the whole duty of subjects to their princes and governors; honouring their persons, reverencing their authority, assisting them against their enemies, defending the rights of their government, and conscientiously rendering to them their due customs and tributes: but more especially and particularly it includes our free and ready submission to them, in yielding a cheerful obedience to their commands, so far as we can innocently, and consistently with our duty to God; and where we cannot, in patiently undergoing all those pains and penalties they shall think fit to inflict on us for our disobedience; in suffering their unjust persecutions without murmuring or clamour, without disturbing their government, or resisting their authority, or endeavouring to repel their force with force; but meekly submitting our cause to the judgment of God, who is the patron and protector of oppressed innocence. But for our clearer understanding this necessary duty of subjection to our princes and governors, I shall briefly explain the particulars implied in it, which are these five:

First, It implies our ready and cheerful obedience to them in all lawful things.

Secondly, Our obedience to them in all doubtful things.

Thirdly, It implies our obedience to them in all those cases wherein we are not able to judge for ourselves.

Fourthly, It implies great wariness and caution, in pronouncing against their judgment and determinations.

Fifthly, It implies our meek and patient submission to the penalties of their laws and determinations, when, upon a full persuasion of the unlawfulness of them, we cannot actually comply with them.

First, This subjection to our prince implies our cheerful and ready obedience to him in all lawful things. For whatsoever God hath neither commanded nor forbidden by his own immediate dictate and authority, he hath authorized his vicegerents to command or forbid, as they shall judge it most expedient for the public: so that when they command what God hath not forbidden, or forbid what he hath not commanded, their will is God's; who commands us by their mouths, and stamps their injunctions with his own authority: and unless we admit this, we totally divest the magistrate of his power of making laws; because there remains no other matter for new laws, but only that which the laws of God hath left indifferent: so that unless this may be commanded or forbidden by the magistrate, he hath no new matter left to make new laws of. When therefore the matter which he enjoins or forbids is left free and unrestrained by the laws of God, we are obliged in conscience, by that divine authority which God hath vested him with, to render him a free and cheerful obedience.

Secondly, This subjection to our governors implies our ready obedience to them in all doubtful things. For it is to be considered, that it is as much our duty to obey our governors in things that are lawful, as not to obey them in things that are un-

lawful: and therefore, if we only doubt whether their commands are lawful or no, our doubt ought to make us as fearful of disobeying, as it doth of obeying them; because the danger of sinning is on both sides equal; and therefore in this case, where we are necessitated to determine ourselves one way or the other, it is doubtless our duty to determine on that side which makes most for the public security and peace; which, next to the honour of God and the salvation of souls, ought to be preferred above all things. Wherefore, in cases of a doubtful nature, it is both modest and safe to subscribe to the judgment of our superiors; because in so doing, we have not only our own ignorance to excuse, but their authority to warrant us; and if we should happen to be in the wrong through our modesty and humility, it will be safer for us than to be in the right through our pride and self-conceit.

Thirdly, This duty of subjection to our governors implies our ready obedience to them in all those cases wherein we are not capable of judging for ourselves. For he who refuses to obey his governors in matters that he cannot judge of, disobeys, he knows not why; and to avoid doing that which he doth not know to be a sin, refuses to do that which he knows to be a duty. So that though that which he refuses should be unlawful; yet this cannot be the motive of his refusal, who understands not the reasons which make it so: but by following the reason of our governors, where our own cannot guide us, we take the best course we can not to be mistaken; and if we should be mistaken, we have this to excuse us, that it was by following an authority which God himself hath set over us; whereas, if we are

mistaken on the other side, we are altogether inexcusable.

Fourthly, This duty of subjection to our superiors doth also imply great wariness and caution in pronouncing against their judgment and determinations. For by the laws of Christian modesty we are obliged to believe our governors to be wiser than we; because they have a larger prospect of things, and greater advantages of inquiring into them: and therefore, though we may have some little probability that their judgment is false, or their command unlawful, yet we ought not presently to determine it so, unless it be in such plain and evident cases, as do not only outweigh the probability of their opinion, but the authority of it too. For he who rashly rejects the command of his superiors as unlawful, plainly shews, that it is not so much the sin of their command that displeases him, as the authority of it; and that it is not his conscience that takes offence at it, but his humour: for if it were conscience, the reverence which he bears to the authority which commands him, would inspire him with an awful respect to the judgment of his superiors, and a modest suspicion of his own. He therefore who, upon every slight appearance of probability against the judgment of his superiors, immediately pronounces it false and erroneous, plainly shews, that he had too little deference to them, and too much to himself; and while he thus undervalues their wisdom, and overvalues his own, it is evident, that he wants a great deal of that modesty and humility that becomes a dutiful and obedient subject.

Fifthly and lastly, This duty of subjection to our superiors also implies our meek and patient submis-

sion to the penalties of their laws, when, upon a full persuasion of the unlawfulness of them, we cannot actually comply with them: for when the commands of our prince do interfere with the commands of God, it is an undoubted rule, that we must obey God rather than man; but then, at the same time that our allegiance to the throne of heaven obliges us to refuse active obedience to our temporal prince, it indispensably obliges us to render passive, and not to use any violence against him, though it be in the defence of our estates, or liberties, or lives, or, which ought to be dearer than all, our religion: for the just use of violence is founded in a just authority over the person upon whom it is exercised; and supposes a right in him that uses it to call the person to account against whom he uses it, and punish him according to his demerit; without which right, the use of violence is an injurious outrage and oppression. But sovereign princes are in their several dominions next to and immediate under God, the most high sovereign of the world; and therefore, having no authority but his above them, are accountable only to his tribunal. So that for subjects in any case whatsoever to offer violence to their prince, is to usurp the throne of God, and invade his sovereign tribunal: for in offering violence to them, we claim a superiority over them; and in so doing, impiously trespass on the peculiar of the almighty, and arrogate his divine prerogative of being *King of kings and Lord of lords*. For since God alone is placed above them, as being the sole King of sovereign kings, how can we assume superiority over them, without setting ourselves in the place of God? Unless therefore we will render ourselves guilty of the highest

affront to, and profanation of the Divine Majesty, we have no other remedy, whenever we are reduced to that extremity, as that we cannot obey our prince without disobeying God, but to discharge our duty courageously and faithfully to God, and meekly and quietly to submit to the unjust persecutions of our prince, referring our cause to that sovereign tribunal, before which princes and peasants must one day give an account together, for every unjust and unrighteous action. And though this may seem a hard chapter to those who consider only one side of the case; yet there is nothing more apparent, than that the liberty of resisting princes would prove a far greater mischief to the world, than all the cruelties and oppressions of the most barbarous tyrants: for what though there never was any governor so wise and good as not to be chargeable with some faults and miscarriages, we ought to consider that our world must be governed by men, and not by angels; and that perhaps there never was any lawful prince so bad, the benefits of whose government did not far outweigh the mischiefs of his tyranny; and that therefore it is wisely eligible for us, rather to suffer a less evil than to deprive ourselves of a greater good. It is a notable saying of Tacitus, where he brings Cerialis, the Roman general, thus bespeaking his revolted soldiers: *Quomodo sterilitatem, aut nimios imbres et cætera naturæ mala, sic luxum vel avaritiam dominantium tolerate. Vitia erunt donec homines; sed neque hæc continua, et meliorum interventu pensantur:* i. e. "You must bear the luxury "and covetousness of your rulers, as ye do barren-"ness and unseasonable showers: there will be faults "as long as there are men; but bad men are not al-

"ways; and we are generally compensated for them "with a succession of good." But had God left us at liberty to resist when we are oppressed, the consequence of this must have been an eternal state of war; in which, instead of suffering the oppressions of one tyrant, we should every one turn tyrant to every other; and therefore it is apparently for our good, that he hath tied up our hands. And thus with all possible brevity I have explained the particulars included in this duty of subjection.

I now proceed to the third and last considerable in this duty, viz. the object of it, viz. *the higher powers:* by which it is evident we are to understand the persons of sovereign princes and governors, and not the laws and constitutions, as some of our republican doctors pretend: for this epistle was writ either under Claudius or Nero, whose wills were the only laws they governed by; and yet these were *the higher powers* to whom the apostle requires our subjection; and those whom he here calls *the higher powers,* in the third verse he calls *the rulers,* and in the fourth verse he tells us that this higher power is *the minister of God, and a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil;* which must necessarily be meant of the governors, and not of the laws: and accordingly, St. Peter thus explains it, 1 Pet. ii. 13. *Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king,* ὡς ὑπερέχοντι, *as supreme;* which is the very word that is here used for *the higher powers:* so that by *the higher powers* here must be meant the person or persons that are vested with the supreme and sovereign power. For that in every nation there should be a sovereign power is as indispensably necessary

as that there should be a government: for wherever there is any government, there must be a last appeal; otherwise no difference or controversy can ever be finally decided: and wherever the last appeal is, whether it be to a king, a senate, or to the majority of the people, there must be absolute and sovereign power, from which their can be no farther appeal, and against which there can be no opposition or resistance. For to talk of a supreme power which is not unaccountable and irresistible, is nonsense: for whatsoever power is liable to be called to account, or resisted, hath a power that is superior to it, and cannot be supreme: and accordingly the apostle declares in the verse ensuing my text, that *whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God;* and that *they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* Now the supreme power to which we of this nation owe subjection is the king; whom our laws declare and recognise to be our supreme and sovereign lord: for so, for instance, the statute of *Præmunire* declares, that "the crown of England is "in no earthly subjection, but immediately subject "to God in all things touching the regality of the "same;" and 25 Hen. VIII. 21. makes this recognition to his majesty, "that his grace's realm hath no "superior under God, but only his grace; and that "next unto God they owe him a natural and hum-"ble obedience:" and in other laws it is declared to be high treason to levy arms against the king, either within or without the realm; and that it is unlawful for both or either houses of parliament to raise or levy war, offensive or defensive, against his majesty, or his heirs and lawful successors; and that it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever, to take up arms

against the king; and that we are to abhor that traitorous position, of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those who are commissioned by him. By all which it is abundantly evident who this higher power is among us, and to whom we are to render our subjection.

Having thus explained the terms of the duty, I proceed, in the next place, to the reason of it; *for the powers that are, are ordained of God.*

All sovereign princes do derive their power and authority from God, whose almighty providence doth more peculiarly concern itself in the disposal of crowns and sceptres, and doth influence all second causes to conspire in the advancement of such persons to empire, as he himself has first chosen and approved: for there is no person can have right to govern in God's kingdom under him, unless it be by commission and authority from him: and indeed to derive the authority of sovereign princes from any other head but God is in effect to deny him to be the supreme governor of the world; which those persons would do well to consider, who made the people the fountain of regal authority. For as on the one hand, if it be by God's authority that kings reign, it is God that governs by them, and not the people; so on the other, if it be by the people's authority, it is the people that govern by them, and not God: if it be the choice of the people that makes their prince, without any commission or authority from God, then it is certain that princes are the people's vicegerents, and not God's. But now in all governments the supreme is the fountain of all inferior authorities; and if there be any authority within its jurisdiction that is not from it, and dependent upon it, it must be co-

ordinate with it, and then it cannot be supreme. How then can God be supreme governor of the world, when there are other coordinate authorities with him that are independent from him, and that owe not their being to him? The people's choice therefore, even in elective governments, can signify no more than the bare presenting of a person to God, to be authorized his vicegerent by him; who, if their choice be just and lawful, is supposed to direct them to it by his providence, and consequently to consent to and approve it, and thereby to authorize the person so presented: for sovereign authority in the abstract is ordained and instituted by God; but abstracted authority cannot govern without a person vested with it; and to vest him with it, he must not be only applied to the authority, but the authority must be applied to him. But now where the people have a right to election, they can only apply the person to the authority; but it is God's consent and approbation which applies the authority to the person, who thereupon commences supreme under God, and hath no superior tribunal but God's to account to. And thus, according to the prophet Daniel, *the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men;* because, as Lord of all the lords, and King of all the kings of the earth, he rules by their ministry, and they rule by his authority: and hence in scripture they are said to be *the ministers of God,* Rom. xiii. 6. *the Christs,* or *anointed of the Lord,* Isaiah xlv. 1. and are styled *gods,* and *the children of the Most High,* Psalm lxxxii. 6. And hence also they are said to act in God's stead, *and to judge, not for men, but for God,* 2 Chron. xix. 6. and their kingdoms are said to be given them

by God, and they to be advanced to their thrones by God, Dan. xxi. 37.

Since therefore all supreme powers are ordained, and commissioned, and authorized by God, it hence necessarily follows, that to refuse subjection to them is no less than open rebellion against God himself: for kings in their several provinces are the viceroys of the almighty Sovereign of the world; and therefore, as he who denies subjection to the king's viceroy affronts the authority of the king; so they who deny subjection to the king, brave and affront the authority of the King of kings: for since it is by God's authority that the king rules, it is God's authority that they refuse to be ruled by: for whatsoever the personal qualifications of princes are, we ought to consider that the character they bear is divine, as being a ray and representation of the great Majesty above; and therefore it is not so much to them that we are obliged to bow down, as to the divine image which they bear about them; so that like ambassadors, they derive not their honour from themselves, but from the sovereign majesty which they represent and personate; and the veneration we render them, like that which Moses paid to the burning bush, is not so properly rendered to them, as to the divinity in them. Whether therefore they are good or bad, we are obliged to respect them as the supreme vicegerents of God in the world, and to consider their persons as consecrated with the divine Majesty, which robes and invests them: and herein consists the force of the apostle's reason, *for the powers that are, are ordained of God.*

And now having given you an account of the duty

in the text, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers*, I shall crave leave briefly to enforce it by some other motives and considerations besides that which the apostle here urges, viz. that *the powers that are, are ordained of God.*

First, Consider, that upon our dutiful subjection to our prince depends our temporal happiness and welfare. For as without government there can be no society, so without obedience there can be no government: and so long as men are indisposed to obey, the government must be a burden to them, and they to the government: and whilst the rulers and subjects, instead of being supports, are oppressions to one another, they are in the ready way to dissolve, and fly in pieces; and what can the consequence of this be, but an overflowing deluge of miseries and confusions? Of the truth of which, we of this nation have, not many years ago, made a woful experiment: for when, through our restless impatience of subjection, we had pulled down our lawful sovereign from the throne, and unhinged the ancient frame of our government, what was the issue of it, but oppression, and slavery, and endless confusion? For when once we had unfixed ourselves from our proper centre, how did we roll through every form of government, still addressing to each for relief and ease? And when we had moved every stone, and raised it to the top of the hill, it still came tumbling down again upon us: so that ours, like Sisyphus's labour, was like to have no other end, but various, restless, and endless calamity; till at last God took pity on us, and resettled us on our ancient foundations: so that had it not been for this late shameless and barefaced rebellion, by which, if God had not been more

merciful to us, we had hurled back ourselves again into our old confusions, I could never have imagined we could have been so abandoned of our reason, as in the same age to act over the same tragedy again. But if, as a just punishment of our sins, God should permit us to be so far infatuated, as to sell our liberties again, for fear of being enslaved; to fight against the principles of our religion, in defence of it; to rip up the bowels of our native country, to preserve it; and, in a word, to go to cross or pile with a company of beggarly malecontents, for our own estates and fortunes; and run ourselves into present and certain mischiefs, to prevent future and contingent ones: if these things, I say, should happen again, which God forbid! a very small prophet may easily foretell the woful consequence of it: and when we shall see our fields strewed over again with the carcasses of our friends and relations; our cities, towns, and countries laid waste by an unnatural war; and shall come to cast up our accounts, and to reckon all the blood and treasure we have spent, only to purchase confusion or slavery; then we shall remember perhaps, with tears in our eyes, that it was nothing but a surfeit of happiness that caused our misery. But, beloved, I hope better things of you, and of the wisdom and dearbought experience of the age. If therefore we would be secured from these public calamities, let us render to our prince all dutiful subjection, the least defect of which is an apparent advance towards ruin and confusion.

Secondly, Consider, that upon our dutiful subjection to our prince the honour of our religion depends: for men do generally esteem and value things

according to the present good or hurt which they do in the world; and even religion itself, though it be the most sacred thing among men, is usually valued by the present advantages which accrue from it; and how beneficial soever it may be as to the other life, if it should be found hurtful and mischievous in this, it will be impossible to secure it from the hatred and contempt of mankind. Now there is nothing in which men are at present more generally concerned, than in the support and security of the government under which they live; the weal of which is like a public bank, in which every subject hath his stock and share; so that if once it should appear that our religion is mischievous to government, mankind would soon conspire to proclaim war with it, and to decry and explode it as a public nuisance to the world. Now the generality of men do judge of religion by the actions of those that make the loudest pretences to it; and if once it appear that they are factious and ungovernable, those who understand no better will certainly conclude that it is their religion that teaches them to be so; and being possessed with this opinion of it, it is no wonder if they fall foul on it, and decry it for a common make-bate and kindle-coal: for that which strikes at government strikes at mankind. When therefore we represent our religion as doing so, by making it a pretence for faction and disobedience, we do what in us lies to alarm the world against it, and to expose it as a common enemy to the public odium of mankind: and I verily believe, should men consult the Devil himself what course they were best take to blast the honour of religion, he could not direct them to a more effectual one, than under sanctified pretences to turn rebels to the go-

vernment: and accordingly, heretofore the adversaries of Christianity could find no such effectual calumny to blast and expose it, as this, that it was an enemy to the civil government; as wisely enough considering, that could they but infuse into mankind a belief of this scandal, there was nothing could be more conducive to antidote men's minds against it, and to render it base and infamous in the opinion of the world. Whilst therefore we conduct any seditious design under the holy banners of Christianity, we join hands with its open and professed adversaries, and endeavour, so far as in us lies, to defend their most malicious calumnies against it; and our factious behaviour, glossed with pretence of Christian zeal, is a much stronger proof of that heathen calumny, than all the arguments of Celsus, and Porphyry, and Hierocles together, because the confession of a seeming friend is of much more credit than the accusation of an open enemy. Whilst therefore we make our religion a colour for our faction and disloyalty, we confess it to be guilty of the most infamous thing that it was ever charged with by the worst of its enemies, viz. that it lays trains of factious principles in men's hearts and consciences, on purpose to blow up thrones and governments, and throw the world into ruins and confusions: whereas on the contrary, by our firm and unshaken loyalty to our governors, we give an ocular demonstration to the world, that our religion is good for the best purposes; that it is not only beneficial in order to our future happiness, which, being distant and invisible, is not so apt to affect men, but that it is the most effectual instrument even of our present safety and welfare, as it is the great prop of thrones, and the surest supporter of government, upon which

the welfare of mankind depends: and if we can but once convince men, as we might easily do, by our steady loyalty, that our religion is the best security of government, without which the world of men is a mere wilderness of wolves and tigers; we shall in this do it greater honour, and give it more glorious reputation in the world, than by our most demure and specious pretences to sanctity without it: for whatever men may imagine, it is demonstrable, that factious godliness is a greater reproach and scandal to religion than open profaneness and impiety.

Thirdly, Consider, that upon our faithful subjection to our prince, the safety of our religion depends. For there is nothing in the world can more endanger our religion, than our making it a pretence for rebellion: for hereby we inevitably expose it to the hatred of princes, and do what in us lies to arm their power against it: for by our actions we do in effect make this open declaration to them; "Sirs, to tell "you plainly, ye may thank our religion for our dis-"obedience; we would be loyal, but it will not suf-"fer us; and therefore ye were best have a care of "it; for if ye do not suppress it, it will undermine "your thrones, and one time or other arm the hands "of your people against your persons and dignities."

When therefore we set up our religion against our governors, we force them in their own defence to set themselves against it, and to endeavour, so far as in them lies, to root it out of the world; and if being provoked by our sedition, they should ever draw their swords against it, it may thank us for it, who first began the quarrel, and gave the challenge, and did in effect declare by our actions, that unless they forced us to lay down our religion, our religion would

force them to lay down their crowns; yea, and though we should succeed in our rebellion, and prove too hard for our governors, yet, first or last, our religion will be sure to smart for it. For when we have pulled down them, we must set up some others in their room; and whosoever they are, though they may love the treason by which themselves were advanced, to be sure they will hate the traitorous religion, and never think themselves safe in their usurpation, whilst those principles prevail in the consciences of the people, upon which they rebelled against their former governors. For let men be never so zealous for seditious principles whilst they are rebels, you may depend upon it they will be as zealous against them when they are usurpers, and be as much concerned to suppress and extirpate them, as ever they were before to uphold and propagate them. Of the truth of which you have a notorious instance in the late usurper; who, though while he was a subject, was a zealous stickler for those religious pretences under which that barbarous rebellion was conducted, yet was no sooner seated in the throne, but he grew quite weary of them; and could he but have seduced our sequestered clergy from their natural prince, which he sundry times attempted, would willingly have pulled down those seditious sects that raised him, and reestablished the church of England, of whose inflexible loyalty to government he had had sufficient experience.

Our loyalty therefore is not only the honestest, but the wisest provision we can make for the safety of our religion; because hereby we recommend it to princes as the safest guard of their thrones, and the surest defence of their authority, as that which will

secure and facilitate their government, and tie their subjects to them by their hearts and consciences; and when by good experience they are convinced of this, they cannot be enemies to it without being enemies to themselves, and arming their power against their own authority.

Fourthly, and lastly, Consider, that if we of this nation had no other motive, yet in mere gratitude we stand obliged to render faithful subjection to our princes. For considering with what an easy and indulgent government, and with what a succession of excellent princes God Almighty hath blessed us, I know no nation under the cope of heaven that may be so happy as ourselves, if we please: for as our government is, in the frame and constitution of it, a most easy yoke and gentle burden; so for sundry ages we have had princes as gentle and gracious as our government; princes that have studied our ease and happiness, and that have in nothing so much exceeded, as in mercy and indulgence towards us. For not to mention that glorious lady queen Elizabeth, that wise and learned, that peaceable and gracious prince king James the First, of the blessings of whose reigns but few, if any of us, were partakers; not to mention that pious and every way incomparable prince Charles the First, whose sacred blood is such a monumental shame to treason and rebellion, as must make rebels and traitors, if they have any modesty remaining in them, to blush and be confounded for ever: besides these, it is not long since that God Almighty hath deprived us of one of the wisest, most gracious, and merciful kings that ever swayed a sceptre; a king that had been long endeared to us, not only by the gentleness of his reign, the prudence

of his conduct, and the incomparable sweetness of his temper; but also by sundry miraculous deliverances, and as miraculous a restoration, a restoration that proclaimed and signalized him the darling and favourite of the divine providence; a prince that reigned in all honest hearts by the inconquerable charms of his own native goodness; which had virtue enough in them, had the thing been possible, to have obliged ingratitude, and even to have made faction ashamed and fanaticism loyal.

And now to him, in despite of all the hellish machinations of a restless faction, our present rightful lord peaceably succeeds; a prince whom God seems to have reserved on purpose to make us amends for the inestimable loss we sustained in Charles the wise and good. And indeed, considering the great and princely virtues which adorn his mind, and shine through the whole sphere of his activity, we have all the encouragement in the world to promise ourselves a continuance of those halcyon days under his happy influence, if by our intestine seditions we do not cloud and disturb them, that we have so long enjoyed under the auspicious reign of his brother: for if from an undaunted courage and firmness of mind; if from an immense greatness and generosity of soul; if from an inflexible sincerity and integrity of manners; if from an impartial justice, sweetened with an endearing benignity of temper; if from the fair conjunction of these royal virtues in a prince, a people may presage their own happiness; we have all these to build our hope on in our present sovereign; who, to give an absolute confidence to our hope, hath graciously deposited in our hands that sacred pledge of his own royal faith by a public, re-

peated declaration, inviolably to preserve our laws, and liberties, and properties, and, which ought to be dearer to us than all, the established religion of our church; which for purity of worship and doctrine, for antiquity of discipline and government, for loyalty of principles and practice, outshines all the churches in the world: and for us to mistrust the security of that faith which yet was never forfeited to any man, would be not only rude and disingenuous, but unjust and malicious. So that, considering the admirable frame of our government, and the unparalleled goodness of our princes, we are certainly the most obliged subjects in the world. And if, after this, we should prove factious and disloyal, what will the world say of us, but that we are a people of a base and ungrateful genius, whom no goodness can endear or oblige? and what may we expect from God, but that, as a just retribution for our black ingratitude, he should make us feel the smart of all those barbarous tyrannies and oppressions which hitherto we have unjustly complained of? Wherefore, unless we intend to render ourselves both infamous to men and odious to God, let us cheerfully comply with this great precept of our religion; *Let every soul* of us *be subject to the higher powers*, forasmuch as *the powers that are, are ordained of God.*

SERMON VII.

PREACHED BEFORE

THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN, AND CITIZENS OF LONDON, AT ST. MARY LE BOW, SEPTEMBER 2, 1686.

JOHN v. 14.

Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

THESE words are the advice of our Saviour to the impotent man, whom he miraculously cured, after he had long waited to no purpose at the pool of Bethesda: and seriously when I consider the miserable state to which this ancient city was reduced by the late stupendous fire, and the since glorious recovery of it out of its mighty heap of ruins, it seems to me an exact emblem of this poor patient in my text. With him, not long ago, it was reduced to a wretched impotent condition; its goodly piles lay bedrid in their own sad ruins, almost despairing of recovery; and the utmost that human prudence could hope was, that the next age might see their resurrection. But by the miraculous courage and industry with which God inspired their former inhabitants, behold they are raised again within a few years, more glorious and magnificent than ever; and we that saw their desolations, and were almost ready to give them over for irreparable, have lived to see them rise again in state and splendour out of

their ashes. And now that our city is revived again, and flourishes in perfect health and vigour, methinks I hear the God of heaven bespeak her, as our Saviour did his recovered patient in the text, *Go thy way, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* In which words you have,

I. A caution; *Sin no more.*

II. A twofold reason of it;

1. *Behold thou art made whole.*

2. *Lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

I. I begin with the first of these, *Sin no more.* Which words plainly imply, that he had been a sinner heretofore; and that because he had so, therefore he was reduced to that wretched impotent condition, that his disease was the punishment of his fault, and the product of his own wickedness: for otherwise he had no reason to take warning by it not to sin again. If his former impotence had not been the effect of his sin, it could not have been urged as a proper argument to persuade him to a future reformation. In this therefore the strength of our Saviour's caution lies: The impotence under which thou didst so lately languish, and of which I have now recovered thee, was inflicted on thee by God, as a just retribution for thy wickedness; and therefore, since thou art now happily recovered, beware thou dost not sin again, lest thou provoke him to scourge thee more severely. So that the main design of this caution is to convince us, that those evils and calamities under which we suffer are some way or other occasioned by our sin. And indeed, if we impartially survey those numerous calamities which oppress the world, we shall find them generally reducible to one of these three heads: either (1.) they are

the natural effects of sin, or (2.) the just retributions of it, or (3.) the necessary antidotes against it. Of each of these very briefly.

(1.) In the first place, many of those evils and calamities under which we suffer are the natural effects of sin; and such, it is possible, was the disease of which our Saviour cured this impotent patient; even the natural effect, either of his intemperance, wantonness, or immoderate passion; which are the natural causes of most of those diseases under which we languish. For either they are entailed upon us by our parents, who beget us usually in their own likeness; and so having diseased themselves by their own debauches, derive to us their frail and crazy constitutions, and leave us heirs of the woful effects of their own intemperance and lasciviousness: for so we commonly find the stone and gout, consumption, and catarrhs, derived through many generations from the vices of one wicked progenitor, who, to enjoy the pleasures of an intemperate draught, or the embraces of a rotten whore, doth many times entail a lingering torment upon his children, and his children's children. Others again owe their diseases to their own personal vices, and, by abusing their bodies to satisfy their lusts, convert them into walking hospitals: they suck in rheums and defluxions with their intemperate draughts, and change the pleasure of a sober and temperate life for fevers and the uneasiness of debauches; they swallow their surfeits in their gluttonous meals, and fill their veins with flat and sprightless humours, till by degrees they have turned their sickly bodies into mere statues of earth and phlegm; and, in a word, they waste themselves in their insatiable wantonness, and sacri-

fice their strength to a beastly importunity, and many times contract those noisome diseases that make them putrefy alive, and even anticipate the uncleanness of the grave. And as our bodily diseases are generally the natural effects of our sin, so are most others of those calamities under which we groan. Thus want and poverty are usually the effects, either of our own sloth or prodigality, or else of the fraud and oppression of those we deal with; and wars and devastations, the natural products, either of the ambition or covetousness of those who are the aggressors. Thus sin, you see, is the Pandora's box whence most of those swarms of miseries issue, that sting and disturb the world: and indeed, the God of nature, to deter men from sin, hath coupled misery to it so inseparably, that whilst he continues things in their natural course, we may as soon be men without being reasonable, as sinful men without being miserable. Hence we find, that when he had tried all the arts of discipline on the obstinate Jews, and none were effectual, he at last consigns them to the dire correction of their own follies, Jer. ii. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee.*

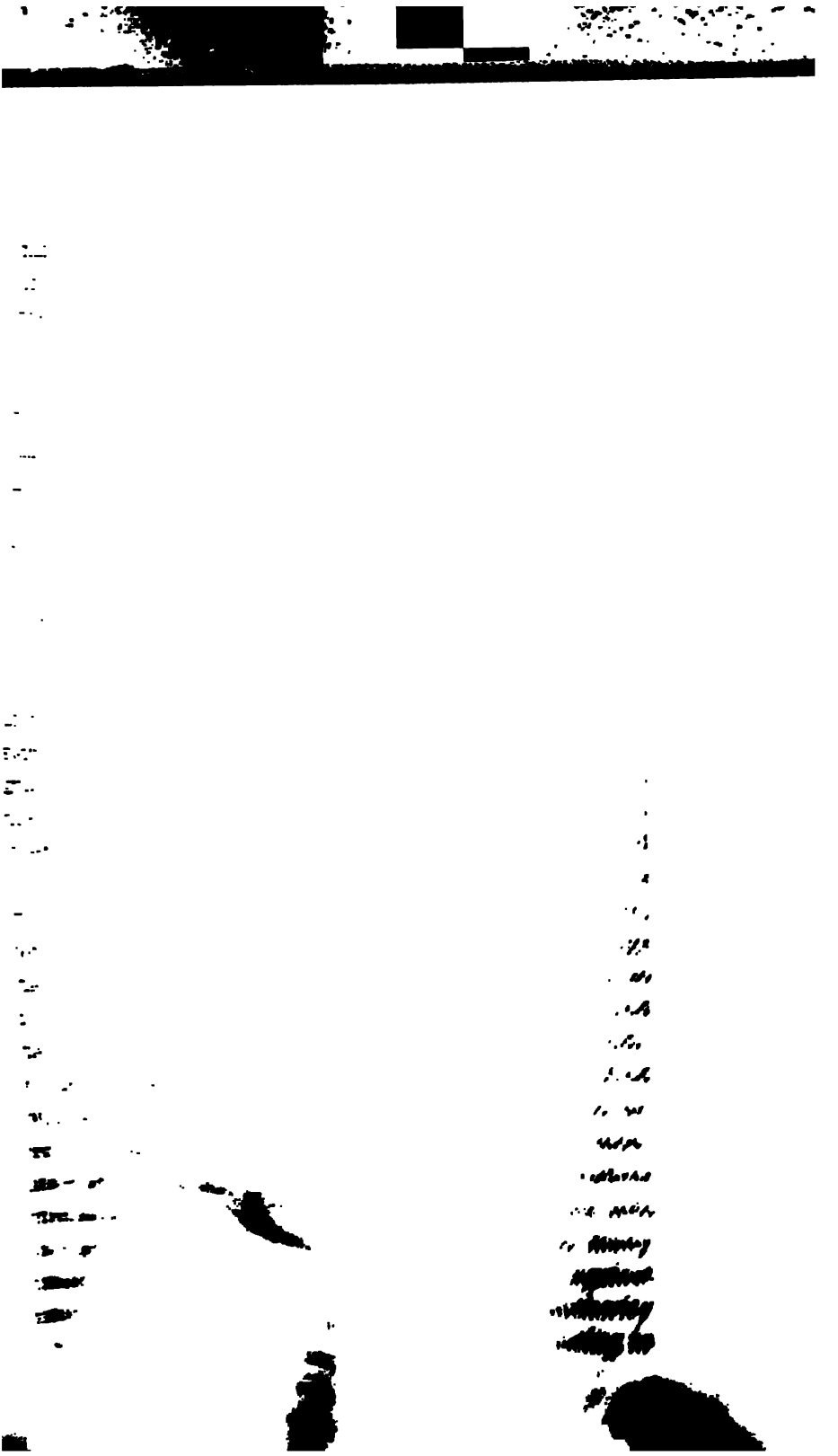
(2.) Again, secondly, Many of those evils and calamities under which we suffer are the just retributions of sin. For besides those numerous evils that are naturally appendant unto wicked actions, there are sundry others under which we suffer, that are the more immediate effects of the divine displeasure, and are inflicted on us by God, as the condign punishments of our rebellions against him: and these are such as proceed not from any necessary causality in the sinful actions themselves, but are

wholly owing to the providence of Heaven; which either inflicts them immediately upon us, or else disposes second causes, contrary to their natural tendency, to come to the production of them: such were the drowning of the world, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, the judgment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and sundry other such like mentioned in the scripture. And though in sundry of those judgments which God inflicts upon sinful men, his hand doth not so visibly appear as it did in those, yet many of them are impressed with such visible characters of the divine displeasure, that we have all the reason in the world to conclude them to be the immediate effects of it. As, when we see some great and unexpected calamity befall a sinner in the very commission of a wicked action; or when he is punished in kind, and the judgment inflicted on him bears an exact correspondence with his sin; or when, upon the commission of some notorious villainy, some strange and extraordinary evil befalls him: in these and such like cases, although it is possible they may be the effects of some casual concurrence of second causes; yet there being such plain indications of designed punishment in them, it would be very unreasonable to attribute them to a mere blind and undesigning chance. And therefore, although on the one hand it argues an uncharitable and superstitious mind, to attribute every calamity of our brother to the righteous judgment and displeasure of God; yet on the other hand, it is no less an argument of a stupid wretched soul, to attribute those evils to chance, on which there are such apparent symptoms of the divine displeasure. And though there is no doubt, but many of those evil events that

befall us do merely result from the established course and order of necessary causes, yet there is no man that owns either a providence, or the truth of scripture, but must readily acknowledge, that in this established course of things God very often interposes, and, for the rewarding of good and punishing of bad men, so varies the courses of these secondary causes, as to produce good and evil by them, contrary to their natural series and tendencies. For should he have limited himself to the laws of nature, and resolved to keep things on for ever in one fatal and unvariable course of motion, he must have tied up his hands from rewarding and punishing, which are the principal acts of his governing providence; and consequently all his promises and threats of temporal blessings and judgments must have been perfectly null and insignificant. This therefore must be acknowledged by all that have any sense of God and religion, that many of those evils under which we suffer are the just judgments of God in retribution for our folly and wickedness. But I see I must hasten.

(3.) And lastly, Many of those evils and calamities we endure are inflicted as necessary antidotes against sin. For certainly considering the degenerate state of human nature, the perverseness and disingenuity of the generality of mankind, afflictions and calamities are as necessary to keep us within the bounds of sobriety, as chains and whips are to tame madmen: and should the great Governor of the world still indulge to us our wills, and accommodate all events to our desires, we should grow so extravagantly insolent, that it would be impossible to keep us within any bounds or compass; and therefore, in charity to

us, he is many times forced to cross us, and to inflict less evils on us, to prevent greater. He sees, that if he should gratify our fond desires, it would be a cruel kindness to us, and hurt us more than ever it would benefit us: it would damp our piety or carnalize our spirits, swell our pride or pamper our luxury, give such a loose to our extravagant passions, as would in the end render us far more miserable than the want of what we desire can do. And therefore, in mere pity to us, instead of giving us the good we ask for, he sometimes inflicts the contrary evil: and as physicians sometimes prick a vein in the arm to prevent the suffocation of the heart: so God many times afflicts us to preserve us, diseases our bodies to antidote or cure our souls. So that though those evils which God inflicts upon us are not always intended for punishments of our sin, but sometimes for preservatives against it: yet in this case, as well as the other, it is sin that is the cause of it: it is this makes the evil necessary, and obliges God in mercy to inflict it upon us. He knows, the sin will injure us much more than the evil he prescribes to prevent it; and therefore being much more solicitous for our safety than our ease, he chooses rather to make us smart, than to suffer us to perish. But if it were not for sin, which is the worst of diseases, he would have no need to antidote us with afflictions; nor doth he so much delight to grieve the children of men, as to afflict them for affliction's sake. So that were it not for our sin, either actual or in prospect, we may be sure, he would neither punish nor afflict us. Thus sin, you see, is the common cause of evil, the fruitful womb of all kinds of mischief: for I doubt [illegible] to one of these three heads most of the [illegible]



engage ourselves, that wherever we have done amiss, we will do so no more: which, if we wilfully refuse, though at present we are made whole, yet we may certainly expect that *a worse thing will come upon us*. And this brings me from the caution, to

II. The reasons of it; which, as I told you, are two:

1. *Thou art made whole.*

2. *Lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

1. I begin with the first; *Behold, thou art made whole:* therefore have a care thou sinnest no more: let the mercy I have shewn thee in curing thee of thy disease, have this blessed effect upon thee, to reclaim thee from thy sins to a life of virtue and purity. So that the sense of this reason is this, that God's mercy to us in recovering us from past calamities, lays a great obligation upon us to reform and amend: but particularly, it lays upon us this threefold obligation; (1.) The obligation of gratitude; (2.) Of justice; (3.) and lastly, Of self-interest. Of each of these briefly.

(1.) God's mercy in restoring us from any past calamity obliges us in gratitude to amend our lives. It is doubtless one of the most palpable signs of a base profligate nature, not to be obliged by favours. It would be an injury to a brute to call him ingrateful: that odious epithet no being can deserve, but one that is degenerated into a devil, that has broke through all that is modest and ingenuous, that is tender and apprehensive in human nature. But to sin on against the mercies of our Deliverer; to take pleasure in provoking him who took pity on us in our low estate, and snatched us from the brink of ruin, is, doubtless, the highest baseness and ingrati-

tude. For whilst we persist in our sinful courses, under the obligations of his goodness, we render him the greatest good, and retort his favours with the basest indignities. Whilst he is shielding us with his careful providence, we smite him with the fist of wickedness; and, like wretched vipers, sting and wound him, whilst he is cherishing us in his bosom. And is this a suitable answer, do we think, to the obligations he has laid upon us? O ungrateful wretches that we are, do we thus requite the Lord our God? With what confidence can we pretend to any thing that is modest and ingenuous, while we thus persist to return the favours of our God with such insufferable affronts and indignities? But then,

(2.) Secondly, God's mercy in restoring us from any past calamity obliges us in justice to amend our lives: for by restoring us he acquires a new right to us. As he is the Author of our beings, he hath an unalienable right and property in all the powers and faculties of our natures: but every time he restores us from an approaching ruin, he doth, as it were, create us anew; he gives us our lives and beings afresh, and thereby renews his title to us; and so many times as he preserves us, so many lives and beings he giveth us; and consequently so many additional rights and properties he acquires in us. And when he hath so many ways entitled himself to us, by creating, preserving, and restoring us, what monstrous injustice is it in us still to alienate ourselves from him, and list those powers and faculties into the service of his enemies, that are his by so many titles? O unjust that we are, thus to fight against God with his own weapons, and affront his authority with the effects of his bounty! For by persisting in

sin under his preservations, we do not only rob him of ourselves, in whom he hath such an unalienable propriety, but also employ ourselves against him. We do not only purloin his goods, but convert them into instruments of rebellion against him; than which there is nothing can be more outrageously injurious. O wretched man! that very tongue with which thou blasphemest him had ere this been silent for ever, had not he stretched forth his hand and restored thee. Those eyes, through which thou shootest the noisome fireballs of thy lust, had been ere this closed up in endless darkness, had not he taken pity on thee, and snatched thee from the brinks of ruin; those members of thine, which thou employest as instruments of unrighteousness against him, had now been rotten in a cold grave, had not his tender mercy preserved thee. And canst thou be such a barbarous wretch, as not only to deny him the use of what he gives, but even to injure him with his own gifts? Consider, I beseech you, how heinously he must needs resent such monstrous injustice and ingratitude: hear but how he complains in a parallel case, Isai. i. 2, 3. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have brought up my children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.*

(3.) Thirdly, and lastly, God's mercy in restoring us from past calamities obliges us in self-interest to reform and amend. For if we do not answer the end of God's deliverances, they will prove curses instead of benefits to us; and what he intended for a

favour will convert into an aggravation of our sin and punishment. The great end why God delivered us, was to win us by his goodness to forsake our sins, and give us space to repent of them: for so the apostle tells us, that *the goodness and longsuffering of God leads us to repentance*, in Rom. ii. 4. But if it doth not lead us thither, it will leave us in a far worse condition than it found us, i. e. it will leave us loaded with much heavier guilt, and bound over to much sorer punishment. For he that sins on under his preservations, is only preserved to *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*, and to prepare more fuel for his future flames. So that, if he still persist in his wickedness, it had been much better for him that God had let him alone to perish under his affliction: for then he had passed more innocent into the other world, and suffered there a much cooler damnation. Whereas now, whenever his wretched ghost departs into eternity, it will go attended with a louder cry of guilts, with the cry of so many more wronged mercies and abused preservations; which will most fearfully enhance her accounts, and inflame the reckoning of her torments: so that when she comes into the other world among those miserable spirits that were snatched away in the common calamities from whence she was rescued and preserved, she will find herself plunged into a condition so much more intolerable, that she will wish a thousand times she had been snatched away with them, that so she might never have had the opportunity to contract those guilts that are the woful causes of it. Wherefore, as we would not make the mercies of God the causes of our misery, and turn our preservations into judgments, we are highly obliged, upon every reco-

very from past judgments and calamities, to reform and amend our lives.

And now what remains, but that we seriously consider with ourselves how much we are concerned in this argument. We of this generation are a people whom God hath exercised with wondrous judgments and deliverances. We have many of us lived to see the bowels of our native country ripped up by an unnatural war, the righteous cause of the prince and father of our country oppressed by prosperous villainy; his innocent blood, our laws, liberties, and religion sacrificed to the lust of rebels and usurpers: and when we had long suffered the consequent miseries and confusions, our merciful God took pity upon us; and, after a long exile, and without the charge and smart of war and bloodshed, restored to us again the lawful heir and successor of our crown, and, with him, our liberties and religion. This, one would have thought, was enough to oblige a people of any ingenuity, and to endear to us for ever the author of such a miraculous mercy. But when, instead of being reclaimed by his goodness, we grew worse and worse, his anger was kindled again against us; and, in his sore displeasure, he breathed forth a destroying pestilence upon us, that in a few months swept our streets, unpeopled our houses, and turned our towns and cities into Golgothas. But in the midst of so many deaths we were preserved, and under the shield of that Providence were kept in safety, when ten thousand arrows flew about our ears. And could we possibly resist the powerful charms of such an endearing, such a distinguishing kindness? Alas! yes, we could, and did, and were so far from being conquered by it, that we grew more obstinate and rebellious. This

incensed him against us anew, and with firebrands in its hands, his vengeance came and kindled our houses into a devouring flame, that with wondrous fury did spread and enlarge itself from house to house, and from street to street, till it had laid this famous metropolis of our nation in a heap of ruins. But yet in the midst of judgment God remembered mercy; and when the unruly element had baffled all our arts, and triumphed over all our resistance, God put a bridle unto his mouth and stopped him in his full career; by which means a great part of us were preserved, and snatched as firebrands out of the flame. And though many of us saw our houses and estates buried in the ruins it made, yet we have lived to see, and that within a few years, the consumed phœnix rise out of her ashes in greater glory and lustre than ever. And now, what have we rendered to the Lord for all these mercies and signal preservations? O ungrateful that we are! we have turned his mercies into wantonness, and fought against him with his own favours: we have spent those lives which he hath preserved to us, in grieving, provoking, and dishonouring him: we have turned those houses he hath restored to us into open stages of pride and luxury: we have consumed those estates which he hath repaired, in supplying our manifold rebellions against him. Thus with his own mercies we have waged war with him. What then can we expect, but that he should disarm us of those mercies which we have so foully misemployed, and thunder his judgments upon us, to avenge our abuse of them? For if he cannot melt our obstinacy with the fire of mercy, it is fit he should attempt to break it with the hammer of judgment: and if, when he

hath tried lighter judgments, they will not do, it is fit he should second them with greater and heavier. Which brings me,

2. To the second reason of the caution in the text, *Lest a worse thing come upon thee;* i. e. Beware thou dost not continue stubborn under the past corrections, lest thou thereby provoke thy angry God to lay his hand yet heavier upon thee, and to scourge thee with scorpions instead of rods. For it is the usual method of the divine providence, when lesser judgments prove ineffectual, to second and enforce them with greater. Thus he threatens to deal with Israel, Levit. xxvi. 21, 23, 24. *And if ye walk contrary to me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins. And if yet ye will not be reformed by these things, but walk contrary to me; then will I walk contrary to you, and will punish you yet seven times more for your sins.* And just as he threatened, so it came to pass; for as they continued obstinate under God's judgments, so he continued to plague them sorer and sorer; till at last, perceiving their disease to be incurable, he cut them off, and utterly destroyed them. And in this method of punishing sinners gradually with sharper and sharper strokes, when they continue obstinate under correction, there is a great deal of reason and wisdom. For, (1.) Their obstinacy swells and enhances their guilt. (2.) It renders severe punishments necessary. And, (3.) Those severer punishments render their final destruction more inexcusable. Of each of these briefly.

(1.) God punishes them with heavier, when they continue obstinate under lighter judgments; because their obstinacy is a greater aggravation of their guilt:

for though our reason indeed tells us, that sin is the greatest and most dangerous evil in the world; yet reason and argument hath not comparably that force to persuade men, as their own sense and experience hath; and they will be much sooner persuaded of the reality of any evil, by feeling the smart of it, than by a thousand dry arguments against it. And therefore, though it be a great aggravation of our guilt to sin against the clear convictions of our reason, yet it is a much greater to sin against the sharp and dolorous perceptions of our own sense and experience. But now, while the judgments of God are upon men, they feel the dire effects of their sin: and therefore, if notwithstanding this they still persist in it, they sin against their sense, as well as their reason; which is in effect a plain defiance of God, and a daring him to do his worst with us. For this, in effect, is the sense and interpretation of our obstinacy: O God, I know thou art angry with my sins, by the dire effects I now feel and experience: but be it known to thee, I despise thy vengeance, and am resolved to sin on bravely in despite of all the judgments thou canst arm against me. And what greater aggravation of sin can there be, than to repeat it with such a blasphemous contempt of the Most High? He is a daring thief, we say, that will venture to rob within sight of the gallows; and he is as insolent a sinner, that dares sin on in the face of judgment. It was looked upon as a monstrous piece of contumacy in the Jews, that when God had only forewarned them by the prophet, *Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now therefore every one from his evil way;* they returned this arrogant an-

swer: *There is no hope: but we will walk every one after his own devices, and we will do every one the imagination of his evil heart.* Jer. xviii. 11, 12. But how much more arrogant would it have been, had the judgment which was only devised against them been actually executed upon them! Such an answer then had been a plain declaration, that they were finally resolved to stand it out against God to the last, and to take no quarter at his hands, though they perished for ever in their rebellions. And when men's guilts are thus enhanced, it is fit their punishments should be proportionable: for otherwise they would be looked upon as things that happen to men without any providential disposal. But now, by regularly proportioning the evils of suffering to the evils of sin, and coupling lesser evils with lesser guilts, and greater with greater, and so equally balancing and adjusting the punishment to the fault; God makes his arm bare to us, and gives us a plain demonstration, that the evils we suffer are the rods of his just displeasure.

(2.) God punishes men with heavier, when they continue obstinate under lighter judgments; because their obstinacy renders heavier judgments necessary. For punishments being designed by God for our cure and recovery, it is necessary they should be proportioned to the degree and strength of our disease; and consequently, when the disease of our sin is grown stronger and more malignant, the remedy of our punishment should be made sharper and more operative. For when men are grown inveterately wicked, to attempt their reformation with smaller judgments is to batter a wall of marble with a pot-gun. Such obstinate rebels must be stormed with

the loudest artillery of heaven, before they will listen to a surrender. An anvil will as soon yield to the fillip of our finger, as a hardened sinner relent under soft and gentle corrections. He must be alarmed with some rousing judgment, and lashed till he bleeds again under the rods of the Almighty, or in all probability he will be undone for ever. His disease is inveterate, and not to be removed but by the strongest cathartics; and therefore to prescribe him a course of gentle physic would be to try experiments upon him, and vex and disturb him to no purpose. God therefore, to cure the folly and obstinacy of sinners, is many times fain to treat them with rigour and severity, when he finds the mild and gentle methods of his providence defeated by them: but first, usually, he tries the softer and more grateful remedies, being unwilling to grieve and afflict his creatures, when there is any other way to recover them. But when softer will not do, it is mercy in him to apply severer; and his last most commonly are the severest; these being the caustics, as it were, which he is fain to apply to our lethargic souls, when no other means will awake and recover us.

(3.) And lastly, God punishes men with heavier, when they continue obstinate under lighter judgments, to render their final destruction more inexcusable, if they will not be reclaimed. For when God's threats will not awake men, he usually sends forth his smaller judgments; which, like the vancouriers of an army, are to begin the skirmish, before he falls on with his main body to ruin and destroy them. Which method he observes out of great pity to his sinful creatures, whom he always threat-

ens before he strikes, and always strikes before he destroys, that he may give them timely and effectual warning to arm themselves by repentance, to prevent their destruction: and accordingly, the first judgment he lets off, he designs for a warning-piece, to give notice of a second, and the second of a third, and all, of that ruining and exterminating judgment which brings up the rear, and is to conclude the tragedy: so that his foregoing judgments do still give notice of the following, and these of the succeeding; and all of that final destruction in the war which closely pursues, and, unless we repent, will at last overtake us. And when our designed destruction approaches us step by step, and every succeeding judgment brings it nearer and nearer to us, so that we plainly see it coming on when it is yet at a distance from us, and yet will not stand out of its way, but desperately meet, dare, and defy it; how can we charge God with being either unjust or unkind to us, who hath taken such an effectual course to warn us of, and retrieve us from it? When he thus punished us more and more, as our sin grew greater and greater; this, one would have thought, might have been sufficient to terrify us from our sins, which we plainly saw were bringing such mischiefs upon us, and to forewarn us of that gloomy and fatal issue that attended them. By all which God doth abundantly manifest, how extremely unwilling he is to destroy us. But if, after all, we will force him to it, men and angels must confess, that he hath been infinitely just and good to us, and that the guilt of our blood lies upon our own heads.

And if this be true, that, when lesser judgments will not reclaim men, God's usual method is to se-

cond them with greater, how much reason have we of this nation to expect and dread a succession of greater judgments than those we have hitherto felt, considering how much we have degenerated under our past corrections, and all along hardened ourselves under the strokes of the Almighty! I do not love to bode ill things: and did not our own sins prognosticate more mischief to us, than any of those suspected appearances that fill our heads with so many fears and jealousies, I could easily secure my mind of the continuance of our happiness under far more threatening apprehensions. But, alas! when I consider how obstinately we have persisted in our sinful ways, in defiance both of the mercies and judgments of Heaven; how, notwithstanding the advantage we have had of being better, as having been baptized into the best church, and educated in the purest religion in the world; a religion that advances no temporal design, no invention to enrich or aggrandize its priests; that hath no aim or project, but only that blessed one of making men good here, and happy hereafter; that hath no arts of compromise between men's lusts and consciences; no devices to supersede the eternal obligations of piety and virtue, but binds them fast upon our consciences by all that we can hope or fear: when, I say, notwithstanding we had this advantage of being good, by being instituted in such a religion as this, I consider how we have grown worse and worse, as if we had resolved to give the world an experiment how bad it is possible for men to be under the most effectual means of being good; I cannot but be fearful and jealous, that our multiplying our guilts will at length provoke God to multiply his judgments upon

us. And O would to God that for this reason we would all be jealous; that we would ground our fears upon our sins and incorrigibleness under the past judgments of God! Then they would produce in us far different effects from what they have hitherto done. Then, instead of firing us with discontent against our governors, and exciting us to faction, sedition, and clamour, they would turn all our animosities against our own wicked lives, which are the causes of all the evils that we feel or fear: then would our fears and jealousies improve into piety towards God, loyalty towards our prince, and charity and justice towards one another; and render us constant to the profession, and faithful as to the practice of our holy religion. Which blessed effects could they once produce, then farewell to all causes of fears and jealousies: then our God would soon disperse all the clouds that hang over us with the light of his countenance, and render us a glorious, a happy, and a prosperous people, and crown us with everlasting glory and happiness hereafter.

SERMON VIII.

PREACHED

AT THE FUNERAL OF SIR JOHN BUCKWORTH, AT THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PETER LE POOR IN BROAD-STREET, DECEMBER 29, 1687.

ECCLESIASTES xi. 8.

But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many.

I SHALL not trouble you with the various renderings of these words; which (with a very little difference) do all amount to the same sense, viz. that supposing it should be a man's good fortune to live very long, and exceeding happy in this world; yet he ought to have great care, that the joys of this life do not so wholly take up and engross his thoughts, as to make him forget those *days of darkness* which must ere long succeed this delightsome sunshine: which days will be many more, and of much longer continuance, than the longest life of happiness we can promise ourselves in this world. So that all the difficulty in these words is, what we are to understand by *the days of darkness*, which are here opposed to a long life of joy and rejoicing in this world. And this difficulty will be easily resolved, by considering the foregoing verse: *Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eye to behold the sun.* Upon which it follows, *But if a man live many years*, i. e. supposing he should for many years enjoy

this pleasant spectacle of the light of the sun; yet let him remember those *days of darkness* wherein his eyes shall behold the sun and light no more; wherein he shall be laid up in a dark and silent grave, whence the light of the sun is excluded, and where the sight of the eyes is extinguished; or, as he expresses it in the third verse of the next chapter, wherein *those that look out at the windows are darkened.* So that we shall have neither visible objects nor visive organs, but be buried out of sight in deep darkness and insensibility.

By *the days of darkness* therefore is evidently meant all that space of time between our death and our resurrection; wherein our bodies shall lie mouldering in a dark grave, utterly insensible of good or evil; till by the powerful call of God they shall at length be roused up out of this fatal slumber into a state of everlasting life and activity: and *these days*, saith he, *shall be many;* though they shall not run out to an infinite duration, but at length conclude in a general resurrection, yet they shall *be many*, many more, in all probability, than any man now alive can hope to live in this world.

The words thus explained resolve into this sense; that how long and happily soever men live in this world, they ought to entertain their thoughts with frequent remembrances and considerations of their approaching mortality. Which is a duty so obvious to the consciences of all men, as being founded on the plainest and most conspicuous reasons, that the men of all ages, and nations, and religions have owned and acknowledged it. Thus the heathen philosophers teach that our lives ought to be a constant meditation of death; and that even in our most plea-

sant and healthful moments, we ought to look upon ourselves as borderers upon eternity; that we should still take care to mingle our delights with the sad remembrance of our mortality; and not suffer the joys of this life to divert our thoughts from that impending fate, which ere long will set an everlasting period both to them and that. But the necessity of entertaining our minds with frequent remembrances of our latter end is founded upon far more powerful motives than a company of fine sentences and pretty sayings of philosophers. For,

First, It is necessary to moderate our affections to the world.

Secondly, It is necessary to allay the gayety and vanity of our minds.

Thirdly, It is necessary to put us upon improving our present enjoyments to the best purposes.

Fourthly, It is necessary to forearm our minds against the terrors of death.

Fifthly, It is necessary to excite and quicken us in our preparations for eternity.

I. It is necessary to moderate our affections to the world. While we are encompassed round with the pleasures and delights of this world, they commonly so engross our minds, that we shut our eyes against all futurities, and are impatient to think of any thing to come, unless it be the continuance of this happy scene of things which is at present before us; with which continuance we are exceeding apt to flatter ourselves, that so thereby we may heighten the gust of our present enjoyments; to which the consideration of their leaving us, or our leaving them, would be apt to give a very ungrateful farewell: and when our thoughts are wholly intent upon these present

goods, and upon the prospect of their continuance, our affections must necessarily run out towards them with an immoderate ardour and greediness. For now our flattering imaginations represent them to us as standing and permanent things, as a kind of immortal heaven upon earth; and accordingly, our affections pursue and embrace them as the best of goods, and are for dwelling upon them, and building tabernacles in them, there to make their final abode, as in their highest and ultimate happiness. Now there is no more effectual way to rouse men's minds out of this flattering dream of happiness, (from which, if they persist in it, the dire experience of a woful eternity will ere long awake them,) than frequently to entertain their minds with the thoughts of their departure hence. For when I set myself seriously to think of my dying hour, that fairly represents to my deluded mind the true state and condition of all worldly happiness. Here I plainly see, that I am a tenant at will to a thousand contingencies; in every one of whose power it is to turn me out of the world and out of my happiness together every moment of my life; and that when I have erected this childish castle of cards, and housed myself in it, as in an imaginary fortress of impregnable security, it is in the power of every puff of wind to blow it down about my ears, and bury me in its ruins. In every serious prospect of my mortality, I behold all my worldly enjoyments, which promised me such mountains of happiness, standing round my death-bed, mocking at all my foolish hopes, and exposing my baffled expectations to scorn and derision: and whilst in the anguish of my soul I cry out to them, O ye helpless impotent things, what are now become of

all your boasted comforts? You that promised to be a heaven upon earth to me, why do not ye now help me in this my last extremity? Why do not ye quench my raging thirst? Why do not ye cool my feverish blood? Why do not ye ease my labouring heart, and quiet my convulsed and tormented bowels? All the answer they return is this: Alas, poor deluded fool! it is not in us to relieve or succour thee. But what, will ye then forsake and abandon me? and shall I have nothing left of all the mighty goods you promised, but only a grave, a coffin, and a winding-sheet? Alas, poor deceived wretch! we leave not thee, but thou must leave us; being summoned away by a fatal power, which we can neither bribe nor resist: thy body must go down into a cold dark grave, and there lie utterly insensible till the resurrection; thy soul must pass into the region of spirits, whither we are not permitted to follow thee, and where thou wilt have nothing to live upon to all eternity, but only the graces and virtues of thy own mind. Farewell then, ye treacherous cheats and impostors, that promised so much, and now perform so little; miserable comforters are ye all, and physicians of no value. Such thoughts as these the remembrance of our mortality will be frequently suggesting to us; and if such thoughts do not cool and allay the heat of our affections to the world, we are incurably fond of being deceived and abused by it.

II. Frequently to remember our departure hence is very necessary to allay the vanity and gayety of our own minds. Whilst we are encompassed with the delights of this world, our minds are generally too frolic and jovial to admit of any serious impressions: and if at any time any good thoughts come in to visit us,

(as those two angels did Lot in Sodom,) to warn us of the dire fate that hangs over us, our affections, like the drunken Sodomites, are presently all in an uproar, and will never be quiet till those unwelcome guests be thrown out that disturb their riots, and mingle harsh discords with our jovial airs. And so long as we continue in this light vain temper, there is nothing will be grateful to us, but frothy mirth, or loose company, or gay ideas of ourselves, and of our own wit, or wealth, or beauty, or finery. And thus we shall fool away our lives in perpetual vanity and impertinence; in rolling about from vanity to vanity, and never be serious, till we are forced to it by some woful experience. But now to fix such a roving and volatile temper, and thereby to render it accessible and hospitable to wise and good thoughts, I know nothing more necessary than the frequent remembrance of our mortality: for as for the future worlds of endless joy and torment, though they are in themselves the most serious things in the world; yet being both future and invisible, vain and sensual minds are not so capable of apprehending them with that degree of certainty that is necessary to render them affecting and prevalent: but that we must die, we are all as certain of as of our present existence; and therefore this, if any thing, must move and affect us. If therefore, together with those gay ideas that possess our minds, we would ever and anon mingle that of our mortality, that would soon reduce our squandered thoughts, and make us serious in despite of our teeth. As for instance; when in thy night-thoughts thou art priding thyself in the pomp and splendour of thy outward condition, think thus with thyself: Alas! within a little while this bed

which now is as gay and as soft as the sleep and the sins it entertains, must be my death-bed; here I must lie a languishing sad corpse, which nothing in this world can help or ease: so that though now I should go on to add house to house, and lands to lands, even till I am become the lord of all my horizon; yet in that sad hour all these will be no more able to relieve me, than the landscape of them upon my walls, or my hangings: then may I as successfully go to my pictures, and try to entertain my mirth and luxuries with them, or to recreate my ear with hearkening after painted sounds, or to gratify my palate with the image of a feast, as to give myself any ease or content with these gay things I am now so proud of. And when at length I have groaned away my fleeting breath, I must be removed from all my company and attendance into a dark, lonely, and desolate hole of earth, where all my present pomp must expire, and be overcast with everlasting death. Again, when in the morning thou art entertaining thy vanity with thy beauty, thy wit, or thy fine clothes, think thus with thyself: Alas, fond soul! all these gay objects of thy pride must ere long convert to rottenness and corruption; that curled forehead must be bedewed with clammy sweats; those sprightly eyes must wax as dim as a sullied mirror; that charming voice must grow as weak as the faint echoes of a distant valley; and all those lilies and roses on thy cheeks must wither into the paleness of death, and shroud themselves in the horrors of the grave. Again, when in the afternoon thou hast been entertaining thyself with mirth, or sport, or luxury, go down into the charnel-house, and there survey a while the numerous trophies of victorious death: in these ghastly

mirrors thou beholdest the true resemblance of thy future state. Forty years ago that naked skull was covered, like thine, with a thick fleece of curled and comely locks; those empty holes were filled with eyes that looked as charmingly as thine; those hollow pits were blanched with cheeks that were smooth and amiable as thine; that grinning mouth did smile as gracefully and speak as fluently as thine; and a few days hence thou must be rotting into just such another spectacle; and forty years hence perhaps, here may thy naked ribs be found mingled with these scattered bones: and then should another take up thy bald skull as thou dost this, he will find it dressed in all the selfsame horrors of this death's head; with its nose sunk, its jaws gaping, its mouth grinning, and worms crawling in at those empty holes wherein now thy eyes roll in amorous glances; and a toad perhaps engendering in that brain, that is now so full of sprightly thoughts and gay ideas. If with these or such like considerations of mortality we would now and then entertain ourselves, they would by degrees wear off the levity and vanity of our minds, and compose us into such a degree of seriousness as is necessary to qualify us for those divine and religious considerations, without which we can never expect either to be made good men here or happy hereafter.

III. That we should frequently remember our mortality in the midst of our most happy circumstances here, is highly necessary to put us upon improving our present enjoyments to the best purposes, considering what use the generality of men make of the enjoyments of this world. It is really a great question, whether it would not be much better for

them, even in respect of this life, to be without them, than with them. For either they shrivel them into miserableness, or melt them into luxury; the former of which impoverishes, and the latter diseases them. For if the former be the effect of a man's prosperous condition, it increases his needs; because before he needed only what he had not; but now he needs both what he hath not and what he hath; his covetous desires treating him as the falconer doth his hawk, still luring him off from what he hath seized to fly at new game, and never permitting him to prey upon his own quarry. And if the latter be the effect of his prosperity, that is, if it melts him into luxury, it thereby wastes his health to be sure, and commonly his estate too: and so whereas it found him poor and well, it leaves him poor and diseased; and whereas it at first took him up from the plough, it at last sets him down at the hospital. And in general, while he is possessed of it, it only bloats and swells him; makes him proud and insolent, griping and oppressive; pampers and enrages his lust, and stretches out his desires into an insatiable boulimy; sticks his mind full of cares, and his conscience of guilts: and by all these woful effects inflames his reckoning with God, and *treasures up wrath for himself against the day of wrath.* All which arises from the want of a frequent remembrance of our mortality. For did we but often ruminate upon this, that it is but a very little while that we have to enjoy the comforts of this life, and that within a very few years, yea perhaps a few days, we shall be stripped of them all, and be sent as nakedly out of this world as ever we came in: and when we are gone hence, of all the goods that we have left behind

us we shall have nothing to live upon to eternity, but only the good that we did with them, the necessities that we relieved, the oppressions that we eased, the nakedness that we clothed, and the hunger that we satisfied: these indeed will *follow after us*, and feed us with content and happiness to eternal ages. But if we are destitute of these, we shall ere long be shipped off from all our present enjoyments, and be landed in another world upon a strange, inhospitable shore, and there be left miserable poor wretches, without so much as one drop of the comforts we now enjoy, to satisfy our tormenting desires, or to quench our still raging thirst after happiness: then we shall wish a thousand and a thousand times over, that instead of gratifying our luxuries with the mispence of our wealth, or feeding our insatiate avarice with the continual increase of it, we had, by doing works of piety and charity with it, *made ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that so, when we failed, they might receive us into everlasting habitations*, and there entertain us with pleasure and delight for ever.

Well then, seeing that ere it be long we must leave all these our present possessions behind us, it highly concerns us, while we enjoy them, to do all the good that we are able with them. And seeing we are allowed to carry nothing of them but the good we do with them along with us, to enrich and maintain us in our eternal condition, by doing good with our wealth we shall convert and proselyte it, and make that an offering which others make an idol; we shall make this earth tributary to heaven, and, in a much nobler sense than the new system of astronomy teaches, advance it into a star and a ce-

lestial body. By this we shall transmit it into the eternal world as it were by bill of exchange, there to be repaid us ten thousand fold in glory, and honour, and immortality; and ten thousand ages hence we shall be enriched with the product of it, and receive a vast revenue of happiness from it for ever.

Suppose now that you were a merchant in a far country, where you were allowed for an uncertain time the benefit of free trade and commerce, in order to your gaining a good estate to maintain you, whenever you should be forced to return to your own native soil; would you be so indiscreet as to lay out all the product of your merchandise in building fine houses, or purchasing great farms, when you know not how soon you may be commanded to depart, and to leave all these immovable goods behind you? or rather, would you not think yourselves obliged, by all the laws of interest and discretion, to convert all your gain into portable wealth, into money or jewels, or such movable commodities, as when you depart hence you might carry home along with you, and there be able to maintain yourselves in many years' ease and plenty? Do but think then, and think it often, that here you are strangers and foreign merchants; that you came hither from another world, to which you know not how soon you must return again; that all the wealth, the houses, and lands, you gain by your present commerce, are immovable goods, which you must leave behind ye when ye go from hence; and that there is nothing of them portable but what you lay out in piety and charity; and that therefore it concerns you, while you have opportunity, to store and treasure up a plentiful proportion of these, that so, when you are shipped off

into the eternal world, you may carry such an estate of them thither with you, as may suffice to maintain you there in glory and happiness for ever.

IV. That we should frequently remember our mortality, even in the midst of our most happy circumstances here, is highly necessary to forearm our minds against the terrors of death. Whilst we abound with the enjoyments of this life, we are apt to put far from us the evil day, and, with the rich churl in the gospel, to promise ourselves many years' ease and voluptuousness in this world: so that death generally steals upon us before we are aware; and, like a thief in a frightful visor, surprises in the midst of a deep security; and after we have struggled with him a few moments to no purpose, robs us of our lives and our happiness together.

And O how terrible must death be, when it approaches a man under such circumstances; when the poor deluded wretch hath been just singing a soft *requiem* to himself, *Soul, take thy rest and ease; thou hast goods laid up for many years*, and many years to possess and enjoy them; for death now to pronounce that fatal sentence, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee;* now, when he thought all was safe, and concluded himself secure of a long lease of life and happiness; now, before he hath given himself the leisure to think of his dying hour, or to fortify his heart with any wise or good thoughts against the terrors of this terrible one, that is just now brandishing its fatal shaft at his breast; how must it needs blank, and amaze, and confound him! And what a trembling horror must it strike through his heart, to see himself thus unexpectedly hurried away, one part of him to the grave and the

other to eternity; now, when he thought himself so securely possessed of a long enjoyment of the good things of this life!

Wherefore, as we should be forearmed against the terrors of death, and enabled to abide his dreadful approaches with a firm and constant mind, it concerns us now, while we are surrounded with the joys and pleasures of this life, to entertain our minds with frequent thoughts and remembrances of him; to retire now and then into a charnel-house, and there to read lectures to ourselves upon the skeletons and death's-heads, those emblems and representations of our approaching mortality; and from them to take such lively pictures and ideas of this king of terrors, as may render his grim visage and fearful addresses more familiar to us, and give our thoughts a more intimate acquaintance with him, and with the manner and method of his approaches; with what an army of diseases he is wont to lay siege to the fort of our life; and how, in despite of all the resistances of nature, he plants and quarters them in our veins, and arteries, and stomachs, and bowels, and from thence infests us all over with continual anguish and pain; how, when he hath tired and exhausted us with his continual batteries, and worn out our strength with an uninterrupted succession of wearisome nights to sorrowful days, he at last storms the soul out of all the outworks of nature, and forces it to retire into the heart; and how, when upon this last retreat of life, he hath marked us for dead, in a cold baptism of clammy and fatal sweats, he summons our weeping friends together, to assist him in grieving us with their parting kisses and sorrowful adieus; and how at length, when he is weary of tormenting us any

more, he rushes into our hearts, and, with a few mortal pangs and convulsions, tears the soul from thence, and turns it out to seek its fortune in the wide world of spirits; where it is either seized on by devils, and carried away to their dark prisons of sorrow and despair, there to languish out its life in a dismal expectation of that dreadful day, wherein it must change its bad condition for a worse; or be conducted by angels to some blessed abode, there to remain in unspeakable pleasure and tranquillity, till the great day of its coronation with a glorious resurrection. If we would thus frequently survey our approaching mortality in all the circumstances and appendages of it, we should hereby familiarize its terrors to our minds; so that whenever it happens to us, our thoughts, which have been so long accustomed to converse with it, will be much less startled and amazed at it; and the often remembrances we have passed upon it will put us upon laying in such wise and good thoughts and considerations, as are best able to fortify our minds against it, and to inspire us with courage and alacrity under it.

V. and lastly, Frequently to remember our mortality in the midst of our most happy circumstances here, is highly necessary to excite and quicken us in our preparations for eternity. And hence it is, that we are so often called upon in this militant estate to *consider our latter end*, Deut. xxxii. 29. and by the examples of the best men are invited *so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*, Psalm xc. 12. *and to wait till our change comes*, Job xiv. 14. To which end also we are put in mind that *here we have no abiding city*, Heb. xiii. 14. and that *it is appointed for all men once to*

die, Heb. ix. 27. and that *our life is even as a vapour, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away*, James iv. 14. And to this purpose the apostle applies this consideration, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. *Now this I say, brethren*, (i.e. of our uncertain abode and continuance here,) (upon which he exhorts us to compose ourselves to a great indifferency as to the things of this world,) *it remains, that they that have wives be as if they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away:* i. e. Since your time here is so very short and uncertain, see you endeavour beforehand to loosen yourselves from this world, and to put yourselves into a fit posture to leave it: for it is but a short scene of things, that will quickly be shifted, and then there will an eternal state of things succeed it. And indeed, since to die well is the last act and final consummation of our life, it must needs highly concern us to arm and prepare ourselves for it beforehand, lest we lose the prize by stumbling just at the goal, and after a long voyage miscarry within sight of harbour. For in the hour of death we throw our last cast for an eternity of happiness or misery: and how much are we concerned to throw that well upon which so vast a stake depends! O, my brethren, it is a most serious thing to die, to pass this dark entry of eternity, through which as we go right or wrong, we are made or undone for ever: for to carry us right through, it is not a few death-bed sorrows or good wishes; it is not a few extorted promises, or forced resolutions, or racked confessions, and *Lord have mercy upon us!* O no!

To die well is an expensive passage, which we shall never be able to defray, unless we carry along with us a very great stock of spiritual preparations. We shall have need of a strong and active faith, of a mind well furnished with wise and good considerations, of a deep, and large, and tried repentance, of an unrestrained charity, of a confirmed patience, of a profound submission to the will of God, and a well-grounded hope of a blessed eternity: for without all these together we shall be very ill accoutred to die, and run a fearful hazard of miscarrying for ever. And these are such things as do not usually spring up, like mushrooms, in a night, and much less in the disturbed moments of a dying hour; but do ask a much larger and serener season to grow and ripen in. But if whilst we are entertaining ourselves among the joys and pleasures of this life, we banish from our minds the remembrance of our mortality, and look upon eternity as a thing at a vast distance, this will put us upon delaying and deferring our preparation for it. For in this temper we shall be apt to conclude, that we have time enough to come, to begin and complete our repentance, and that we may safely indulge ourselves yet a good while longer in the free enjoyment of our own hearts' desires, and sin on at present upon this security, that we will certainly repent hereafter: and by this easy train do men toll themselves on through the several stages of their sin and life, till they arrive at their death-bed; and then they begin to think of repenting in good earnest. But then, alas! what will they be able to do, when their thoughts are continually disturbed with the care of disposing their affairs in this world, and the frightful prospect they have of the other?

When their minds are distracted with incessant pain and uneasiness, so that it is not in their power to consider so much as a quarter of an hour together? When through the stupor and indisposition of the organs of their reason, they are not able to range their scattered and unwieldy thoughts into any of those sober reflections and serious meditations that are necessary to the forming of a sincere repentance? In effect therefore, for men to refer their repentance to a death-bed, is the same thing as to retire into a battle to meditate, or to set up a closet to study philosophy in the headquarters of an army; where most men are as capable of free and undisturbed contemplations as they are of repenting amidst the tumults and hurries of a death-bed. And yet upon this dismal extremity do men commonly cast themselves, through their neglect of remembering their approaching mortality: whereas, did they but often remember and seriously reflect on it, they would as soon dare eat fire, as defer their repentance upon the uncertain hopes of futurity. For, alas! what is vain man, that he should talk of repenting hereafter? when perhaps, while the words are in his mouth, the earnest of death is in his hand, or heart, or bowels; when, for all he knows, he may be inflamed with a fever with what he hath drank to-day, or stifled with a surfeit with what he shall eat to-morrow; when he may expire his soul with his next breath, or suck in his bane with the next air; and so many unlooked-for accidents presently may put an end to all his talk of repenting hereafter, and render it impossible for ever! Now of what dismal consequence would it be, should I be thus surprised; if while I presume upon my future repentance, I am merrily sinning on, I

should all of a sudden be hurried away out of the company of my jovial associates into that of howling and tormented spirits, and from my songs and laughter into weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! How would it blank and amaze me, to think that ever I should be so mad as to run such a desperate hazard! How dare we then talk of repenting hereafter, when we consider, that it is not in our power to command so much as one moment of future time? When, for all that we know, the hope of eternity, which is now in our hands, may be lost for ever, and drop through our fingers before to-morrow morning? And that when we lie down at night, and fall asleep securely in our sins, we do not know but before the next twilight we may awake with horror and amazement in hell? Let us seriously consider therefore, that the present time only is in our power; and that as for the future, it is wholly in God's; and that therefore, when we defer our repentance to the future, we do, as it were, cast lots for our soul, and venture our everlasting hopes upon a contingency which is not in our power to dispose of. For all we know, this may be the evening of our day of trial; and if it be, our life and eternity depends upon what we are now doing. Wherefore it highly concerns us, by all the regard we owe to our everlasting safety, wisely to manage this last stake, the winning or losing whereof may be our making or undoing. Thus will the frequent remembrance of our mortality put us upon laying in good store of spiritual provisions against that great day of expense. For he who often considers the great uncertainty of life, the dreadful approaches, the concomitant terrors, and the momentous issues and consequents of death, must be

strangely stupified, if thereby he be not vigorously excited to forearm and fortify himself with all those graces and defences that are necessary to render his departure hence easy, and safe, and prosperous.

And now, having done with the text, I shall only crave your leave to say a few words upon this sorrowful occasion, viz. the funeral of our common friend, sir John Buckworth, who perhaps while he lived was a person as eminently known as ever any merchant that trod the Exchange of London. And indeed considering the great share he had of intellectual endowments, he was a gentleman that seemed to have been marked out by Providence to make a considerable figure among men: for first, nature had enriched him with a clear bright mind, with a quick apprehension, a prompt memory, a steady and piercing judgment, together with a natural presence of mind and fluency and readiness of speech, which enabled him upon all occasions easily to express his own conceptions of things in a very clear and apt language. All which natural endowments he had vastly improved and cultivated, by a long and curious observation and experience. For as nature had fitted him for an active life, so providence soon introduced him upon the stage of action. For as he was born a gentleman, so he was educated a merchant; which perhaps is one of the most advantageous academies in the world, to instruct the mind in the knowledge of men and the management of human affairs. His education furnished him with a fair opportunity of seeing the world, as well abroad as at home; and of prying into the intrigues of commerce, and into the manners and interests of men; whence he drew so many wise and useful observa-

tions, as rendered him a prince among merchants, and an oracle of trade; insomuch that he was thought worthy to be chosen deputy-governor of that wise and great company of the Turkey merchants; and was perhaps as much consulted by his superiors about the interest of the English trade and the mysteries of commerce, as any one merchant of this city or nation. Thus for his intellectuals. As for his morals, I believe that all that knew him will allow him this character: that he was a gentleman of great integrity and fidelity to his trust; of exact justice and righteousness in his commerce and dealings; that he was a studious and successful peacemaker; a great part of his time, before he was called up by his prince into a more busy and active station, being spent in arbitrating differences between man and man: in which he was so expert, so impartial and prosperous, that I am apt to think he cemented as many broken friendships, reconciled as many quarrels, and adjusted as many differences, (which otherwise might have flamed out into destructive breaches,) as most of those blessed peacemakers that are gone before him.

Consider him in his respective relations: and there all that knew him, I am sure, will allow him to have been a faithful, a loyal, and useful subject to his prince, a kind and obliging husband to his lady, a tender and a wise father to his children, a prudent, careful, and benevolent master to his servants; and, in a word, a wise counsellor, a faithful friend, and a just and diligent correspondent. As for his religion, he was a hearty protestant of the church of England, which, upon mature judgment, and upon thorough information, he preferred, for the loyalty of its prin-

ciples, the simplicity of its doctrines, and the primitive purity of its worship and discipline, before all the churches in the world: and what his judgment was of our church, he visibly expressed by his constant attendance upon the public offices of our religion upon the Lord's day; from which he never absented, but when he was either detained by sickness or some very urgent unavoidable occasion, and in which he always demeaned himself with all the profound reverence and devotion that outwardly expresses a mind inspired with a pious sense of its duty, and of the awful presence of the great Majesty of heaven.

Thus he lived: and as for his death, though it was accompanied with all the circumstances that could render a man fond of life, and make him loath to depart; though he had a plentiful estate, a loving and beloved wife, dutiful and hopeful children, and these all of them disposed of, and happily settled in the world to his own heart's content; to leave all which at once seems a very hard chapter to a mind not well resolved; yet all these together had no such effect upon him. Indeed, not long before his death, though then in perfect health, he seemed to have a boding of his approaching fate: for having to his heart's desire disposed of his only son in marriage, (who was the last of his children undisposed,) he hath been often heard to say, "that now, he thanked "God, his business in this world was finished, and "that it was high time for him to think of his de-"parture into another." And when, soon after, he was seized with his last sickness, he bore it with an invincible courage and constancy: and though the last part of it was extremely painful to him, he un-

derwent it without complaint or murmuring; with a mind that seemed entirely resigned to the sovereign Disposer of all events. And when he perceived the approaches of death, and found that he was going off the stage of mortals, he never shewed the least sign of regret or reluctancy, but took a solemn leave of his friends; and, which was much harder, of his dearest relatives, who stood lamenting and weeping about him; and this with a mind very serious indeed, but in all appearance very calm and composed. And finally, he gave up the ghost like a brave man and a good Christian; with a firm and undaunted mind, and as one that had placed his main hope on the other side of the grave, and did expect to exchange an uneasy mortal life for an immortal one of pleasure. And therefore, though I make no doubt, after all, but that, as a man, he had his faults, (and he that hath none let him cast the first stone,) yet I am sure he had his virtues, and those very eminent ones too: and therefore it will highly become us who survive in charity to cast a veil over the one, and in piety imitate and transcribe the other: that so with him, and all our other Christian brethren departed this life in God's true faith and fear, we may have our final consummation in bliss and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *To whom, with the Father and eternal Spirit, three Persons and one God, be ascribed all honour, and glory, and power, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.*

SERMON IX.

PREACHED

AT FULHAM, ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1689. AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHERS IN GOD, EDWARD LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER, SIMON LORD BISHOP OF CHICHESTER, AND GILBERT LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL.

JEREMIAH iii. 15.

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

IT is at least highly probable, that of those ancient prophecies which concern the extent, and purity, and glory of our Saviour's kingdom, there are several which as yet have never been accomplished; but that before the consummation of all things, there is yet a time to come, wherein our Saviour will once more miraculously display the victorious banner of the cross, and go forth conquering and to conquer, till he hath consummated his victories in a glorious triumph over all the powers of the earth; wherein he will come with his fan in his hand, and throughly purge the floor of his church from all that chaff of superstition and idolatry, schism and heresy, irreligion and immorality, with which it is yet, and hath for many ages, been spread, and almost covered; in the room of which, the truly ancient faith, the sincere piety, the unaffected virtue, the open, generous, and unbounded charity, which Christianity teaches and

prescribes, will be the universal livery and cognizance of the Christian world. And, as an introduction to this glorious state of things, it is foretold, that God will raise up in his church a great many pastors and teachers, eminent for learning and wisdom, piety and virtue, who by the efficacy of their doctrine, the sanctity of their lives, the prudence of their conduct, and the unwearied activity of their zeal for God and the good of souls, will greatly contribute to this glorious work of the conversion of the heathen and the reformation of the Christian world: for this God promises in the text; *And I will give you pastors after my own heart*, &c. And that this promise refers to this future glorious state of the church is evident: for it is made to the Jews upon their restoration from their last and great dispersion; as you may see from ver. 12. to the text: which restoration of theirs the scripture represents as the opening and introduction of this glorious face of things.

Before we proceed to the main argument of the text, it will be necessary to inquire who are here meant by *pastors*? *Pastors* properly signify feeders of flocks and herds of beasts; and more particularly, shepherds, or feeders of flocks of sheep; and these the scripture usually expresses by the Hebrew *rogim*, which generally signifies pastors of beasts: but metaphorically, it signifies rulers and teachers of men; who in scripture are most commonly expressed by the Hebrew *parnasin*, which is the word in the text. For thus in scripture, not only God himself, the ruler and teacher of the world; not only Jesus Christ, the great King and Prophet under God the Father; but kings also, who are God's vicegerents,

are frequently styled pastors and shepherds: in which last sense sundry expositors will have the words understood in the text; *I will give them kings and princes according to my own heart.* But besides kings, this title in the scripture is frequently given to spiritual rulers and teachers: thus Isaiah lvi. 10. 11. the *blind and ignorant watchmen*, by which all expositors understand the ecclesiastic governors and teachers, are called *dumb dogs, and shepherds that cannot understand.* So also, Jer. l. 6. *My people have been lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray*, i. e. their prophets and teachers have misguided them: and so in sundry other places. And in the New Testament the very office of bishops and teachers is frequently described by feeding the flock of Christ; and the apostle, enumerating the several orders of ministers which Christ had instituted in his church, mentions among them *pastors and teachers;* Eph. iv. 11. which title of pastors seems to have been derived from the Jewish synagogue, in which there were three *parnasin*, or pastors, whose office it was to rule and teach, to administer justice to the people, and to instruct them in the law; and accordingly, by pastors, all Christian antiquity understands bishops and spiritual guides and teachers; whom all ecclesiastical writings frequently dignified with this style of pastors: and in this latter sense, viz. of ecclesiastical rulers and teachers, I conceive the word pastors is more peculiarly meant in the text; where it is said, that these pastors should *feed them with knowledge and understanding;* that is, according to the most natural signification of the words, shall instruct you in the true knowledge of God and of religion, according to

that of Mal. ii. 7. *The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.* Though I confess the words may import no more than, *who shall rule you with prudence and discretion;* as it is said of David, *That he fed the people of Israel according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with the skilfulness of his hand,* Psalm lxxviii. 72. But this latter sense being more forced and critical, we ought, according to the most known rules of interpretation, to prefer the former, which is most natural; and then by pastors here must be understood the spiritual rulers and teachers, viz. the bishops and presbyters of the church, whose peculiar office it is to instruct the people in the knowledge of God and of religion. So then that which God here promises is this, that he will very much advance and raise the state of his church in the latter days: for so ver. 16, 17, 18. *In those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.* For then shall their ceremonial worship be utterly abolished, of which the ark of the covenant was a principal part; and they that worship shall worship in spirit and in truth. And then he tells them, *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, in the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart: and in those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north*

to the land that I have given for an inheritance to their fathers. Which glorious things, being yet for the most part unaccomplished, must be reserved for future ages. And in order to the introduction of this state of things, God promises that he will give them spiritual guides and pastors after his own heart, &c.

The words thus explained necessarily import this proposition, which shall be the subject of the ensuing discourse:

That such spiritual guides and pastors as are according to God's own heart, do very much conduce to the glory, and beauty, and perfection of the church. In prosecution of which argument, I shall endeavour,

I. To shew what those qualifications are which render men pastors according to God's own heart.

II. In what respects pastors so qualified do conduce to the glory, and beauty, and perfection of the church.

I. First, We will shew what those qualifications are which render men pastors after God's own heart. For God doth not approve nor disapprove of men in any state or capacity, out of a fond respect or partiality to their person: persons, as such, are all alike and indifferent to him; and it is only their qualifications that do distinguish them in his esteem and affection. Now there are these three qualifications necessary to render men pastors after God's own heart:

First, Their being sent and commissioned by God.

Secondly, Their being thoroughly instructed in the knowledge of God's mind and will.

Thirdly, Their being exemplary in their conversa-

tion of the goodness and purity of their own doctrine.

First, To qualify men for being pastors after God's own heart, it is necessary that they be sent and commissioned by him: for such as are God's pastors do act in God's stead, and are his spiritual vicegerents in the church; and hence they are said to *pray men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God*, 2 Cor. v. 20. And as Christ is styled the supreme Shepherd under God, the sovereign Pastor of the church; so they under Christ are styled *the overseers and shepherds in the flock, to feed the church of God*, Acts xx. 28. and their office is *to feed the flock of God, and to take oversight thereof*, 1 Pet. v. 2. And as Christ was his Father's ambassador to the world, so they are styled *the ambassadors of Christ*, 2 Cor. v. 20. And seeing by their office they act in the stead of Christ, as Christ doth in the stead of God, and are his spiritual proxies and substitutes in his kingdom, it is necessary they should be commissioned by him; otherwise, instead of being his under-shepherds, they are thieves that break into his fold, and there usurp his power and authority. And accordingly you find, that in the very same sense that Christ was sent from the Father, that is, as his authorized and commissioned minister, to act for him, and in his stead, the under-pastors of his flock were sent by Christ: *As the Father sent me*, saith he, *so send I you;* that is, as my commissioned ministers, to act for me, and in my stead, John xx. 21. And to shew that this was the intention of his sending them, he tells them, *He that heareth you heareth me;* because you speak from me, and I by you; *and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth*

me despiseth him that sent me; because you, by virtue of this my mission, represent me, even as I, by virtue of my Father's mission, represent him, Luke x. 16. And as he sent them to act in his stead, and by his authority; so in sending them he transferred upon them all the powers of his own mission from the Father: in which is included the same authority to send others that he had to send them; that so they might derive their mission to others, as he did his to them, through all succeeding generations. For unless by sending them he gave them the same authority to propagate their mission to others, as his Father gave him to propagate his mission to them; how could he truly say, that he sent them as his Father sent him, since he must have sent them without that very authority from his Father, by virtue of which he sent them? And this it is plain the apostles did believe was included in their commission; seeing without any other authority, at least that we know of, they afterwards proceeded to ordain and commission others; and thereby to empower them still to derive the same commission to others, and so on in a continued succession to the end of the world: as is evident by innumerable instances in the New Testament, and especially in those two famous ones of Timothy and Titus, the first bishops of Ephesus and Crete. Thus Christ ordained the apostles the first bishops, and these ordained their colleagues and successors; and so through the episcopal hands have the holy orders been all along derived, in a continued succession from one generation to another; as is notorious, not only from all ecclesiastical history, but even from St. Jerom himself, (Ep. ad Evagr.) who, though he sometimes, out of a peculiar pique, endea-

vours to level bishops with presbyters, is yet fain to do it with an *excepta ordinatione*. Seeing therefore our Saviour hath thus entailed his mission from God upon all succeeding pastors of the church, and taken such care to consign it down to all future ages; I think it is a plain case, that they who intrude themselves into the pastoral office without it, at least where it may be had, are so far from being pastors after God's own heart, that he looks upon them as so many lawless usurpers and invaders of his authority.

Secondly, To qualify men for being pastors after God's own heart, it is necessary that they should be throughly instructed in the knowledge of God's mind and will: for their office is to be guides of souls; and how should they be guides to others who know not the way themselves? *If the blind lead the blind*, saith our Saviour, *both shall fall into the ditch:* and accordingly God charges the ruin of his people upon the ignorance of the priests; for which he threatens to reject them: *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me:* Hos. iv. 6. And it is a dreadful charge he gives against the ignorant priests of Israel; *His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber,—and they are shepherds that cannot understand:* Isa. lvi. 10, 11. But as for the pastors after God's own heart, a main part of their character, according to St. Paul, is, that they be apt, or fit to teach; which they cannot be, till they themselves be first taught and instructed, 1 Tim. iii. 2. It is true indeed, when the gospel lay hid in the eternal coun-

sels of God, it was necessary that he should immediately reveal it to the minds of those who were to declare it to the world; otherwise it is impossible it should ever have been known to mankind. But when once he had thus revealed it to them, and declared it by them, and had transmitted their declaration by a standing scripture to all succeeding generations; to what end should he still proceed to make new revelations, unless it be supposed, either that he had not sufficiently revealed his gospel to them, or that he hath still some new gospel to reveal? For otherwise, to continue immediate revelation would be only *actum agere*, to multiply actions to no purpose, unless it were to gratify men's sloth and idleness, and excuse them from the trouble of searching and studying the scripture, in which he hath sufficiently transmitted his mind and will to the world. But though God will never be wanting to mankind in any necessary assistance; yet when once he hath put things within our own power, he expects we should do them; and not sit still with our hands in our pockets, expecting that he should do them for us. Since therefore by transmitting to us the scripture, he hath put it within the power of the pastors of the church to understand and teach his mind and will; he expects they should exercise that power in a diligent study of those things which lead to the understanding of it, and not depend upon new revelations for the understanding of those things which are already sufficiently revealed. For thus, till the Old Testament was finished, God continued the spirit of prophecy in the Jewish church; after which he immediately withdrew it, and wholly remitted his people to the conduct of the priests and Levites; who in their forty-eight

cities, which were so many universities for their education in divine learning, diligently read and studied the law, and thereby accomplished themselves to preach and explain it to the people. And in like manner God continued the same spirit of prophecy in the Christian church, till the New Testament was revealed and written, and copies of it dispersed through all the churches; and from thenceforth the spirit of prophecy ceased, and in the room of its first inspired ministers there succeeded an ordinary standing ministry, who by their learning, and industry, and diligent search of scripture, were to supply the defect of immediate revelation, and to qualify themselves to teach and instruct the several flocks committed to their charge: in order whereunto a very large compass of knowledge is required; it being not sufficient for them simply to know and understand the several articles and propositions of religion; but they must also be able to deduce from them their just and natural inferences, and be furnished with proper mediums to assert and prove them, and with strong and powerful persuasions, to press and enforce them upon the minds and consciences of the people. For which end it is necessary that they should be instructed, not only in the art of reasoning, but also in natural and revealed theology, and in moral philosophy; that so they may be able to explain the particular offices of piety and divine worship, and the natures of the particular virtues and vices they exhort to and dehort from; and to enforce them with the eternal reasons of good and evil: but above all, it is necessary that they should be well acquainted with the holy scripture, that great oracle of truth, which from God's own mouth declares his will to the world: and that

in order to this they should be competently skilled in the original languages, in the history, and rites and customs of the ages wherein they were writ. And seeing it is the pastor's office, not only to propound, but also to assert and maintain the holy truths of religion, (which, through the vast multiplication of errors and heresies, are, and have always been very hardly beset,) to accomplish him for this part of his office; it is highly requisite that he should be well acquainted with the true states of controversies, with the history of Christian theology, and of the rise and progress of the several errors and heresies with which it hath always been opposed, so as to be able to trace up those poisonous streams to their fountain-heads. I do not say that all these things are necessary to render men pastors after God's own heart: for I make no doubt but a good man, that throughly understands his religion, may with a little learning do a great deal of good, and be able at last to render a comfortable account of the charge committed to him. But certainly, to render a man a pastor accomplished at all points and for all parts of his office, requires a very large and comprehensive knowledge.

Thirdly and lastly, To qualify men for being pastors after God's own heart, it is necessary that they should be exemplary in their conversations of the goodness and purity of their own doctrine: and indeed this is so necessary, that without it the two former are of little significancy in the esteem of God: it is this alone endears the man to God: and how well soever he may be authorized to his office, or accomplished in his intellectuals, unless the man be approved of God, the pastor can never be according to

God's own heart. And indeed a good life is so necessary to qualify men for the pastoral office, that without it, it is hardly conceivable how they can ever be successful in the discharge of it. For the generality of the people understand with their eyes and believe with their senses: if they see us live as if we believed our own doctrine, they will believe it too: but if not, they will be apt to conclude that we see no ground to believe what we teach them; and from thence to infer that there is none; seeing if there were, one would think it is impossible but we, whose business it is to study religion, should easily see and find it. Thus when pastors openly contradict in their lives what they teach with their mouths, they thereby unteach their own doctrine, and in effect tell their people it is all an ungrounded imposture; and that even religion itself, how zealously soever they seem to contend for it, is in their opinion a mere castle in the air, that hath no foundation but only in the invention of knaves and in the faith of fools. Thus when the vulgar behold religion prostituted by the hypocritical professors of it to base and unworthy ends, this shocks their faith more than a thousand atheistical reasons. They have seen shrewd and crafty men use their religion as jugglers do their boxes, for no other end but only to play tricks with it, and delude and cozen the simple and well-meaning: and hence they first suspect, and at last conclude, that it is only a politic device contrived for secular ends and purposes. Of the truth of which, the age we live in is a sorrowful instance: for, to scorn and despise religion is now no longer the prerogative of wits and gallants; but the infection is spread and propagated into shops and stalls; and even among

the rabble there are apostles of atheism and impiety. And whence should this proceed? Is it to be supposed that such as these philosophize themselves into infidelity? that these found their atheistical principles upon the sage hypotheses either of Epicurus or Aristotle? O no! their argument lies near home, and more open to their capacities; they have seen a world of base tricks played under religious disguises, which tempts them to conclude that religion itself is nothing but a trick and disguise. But when they see those who are the ministers of religion live in a direct opposition to those very laws of it which they themselves prescribe and teach, the most natural inference of it is, that they minister to religion for no other end but to make their fortunes and gain a good subsistence by it; and consequently, that they look upon religion itself as nothing but a secular trade. And while we give the people such reason to suspect that we do not believe our own doctrine, how can we expect that they should believe it, who are far less capable to judge of the reason and evidence upon which it is founded? Wherefore it was not without very great reason that St. Paul exhorts his son Timothy *to be an example to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,* 1 Tim. iv. 12. where you have the particulars in which more especially pastors ought to be examples to others: 1. *In word.* 2. *In conversation.* 3. *In charity.* 4. *In spirit.* 5. *In faith.* 6. *In purity.* Of each of which I shall discourse very briefly.

1. *In word;* that is, as I conceive, in observing a decent gravity in discourse: for just before, the apostle had advised him so to behave himself, as

that no man might despise his youth; and in order to that, that first of all he should be exemplary in word; that is, that his discourse should not be as young men's use to be, vain, or light, or scurrilous, or profane; but that it should be well poised between the vicious extremes, so as neither on the one hand to be over youthful, gay, and frolic, nor on the other to be sour and morose, starched and formal: which latter, though it may take with less discerning people, will render a man suspected by those who look farther than the outside, either of great emptiness or vile hypocrisy: whereas a decent openness and freedom of discourse, mingled with seriousness, gives it both charm and authority, by which it profits and delights together, and entertains the mind with a cheerful education. So that by observing a decent gravity in our discourse, we stamp a graceful majesty upon what we say, which at once pleases, instructs, and awes those that hear us.

2. *In conversation*, which Grotius renders, in sweet and obliging deportment, to carry ourselves at an equal distance from contempt and haughtiness on the one hand, and sneaking and glavering on the other; both which, in the judgment of all discerning men, render us equally mean and contemptible. For to contemn another is to behave one's self above one's self; and to sneak to another is to behave one's self beneath one's self: and for a prince to cringe, or for a peasant to insult, are equally ridiculous. But he who in his conversation observes a just equality (so as neither to be too assuming nor too prostrate, that treats his inferiors and equals courteously and affably, and his superiors and equals with a modest freedom and assurance) shews himself both a wise

and an humble man, that understands the just value both of himself and others; and by such a just demeanour he can hardly fail of obliging all he converses with, but only such as either undervalue him or overvalue themselves.

3. *In charity*, that is, in an hearty good-will and forward beneficence to all men, as we have opportunity; in being ready to supply them in their necessities, to counsel them in their difficulties, to assist them in their just pretensions, to put fair interpretations on their actions, to bear with their pitiable prejudices, to make just allowances for their infirmities, to pity their follies and miscarriages, and use all gentle means to reclaim them; to be long suffering under their provocations, and gentle and easy to be entreated. These are the great acts of charity, in which pastors ought to be exemplary to the people: and being so, they will take the most effectual course, not only to propagate this excellent grace to others, which includes the one half of religion, but also to erect themselves a sure empire in the hearts of their people: by which powerful interest they will be much more effectually enabled to subdue them to the obedience of the gospel; which is the great end of their profession.

4. *In spirit*, that is, in an active and sprightful zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls; such as renders them industrious in their pastoral office, in feeding, governing, and instructing the flocks committed to their charge. For certainly, if for men to be diligent in their callings be a part of their religion; for pastors to be diligent in theirs is a main part of their religion, there being no calling in the world wherein religion is so nearly concerned, and

upon which religion lays so much stress, and charges so severe an account. For so St. Paul tells us, that the pastor's office is *to watch for the souls of men*; and that his charge is *to give an account for them*, Heb. xiii. 17. And certainly he whose office it is to watch over so rich a treasure as the souls of men, and whose burden is to give an account, at his own eternal peril, for all that are lost through his negligence, had need be very active and diligent in the discharge of so vast and dangerous a trust.

5. *In faith;* that is, as I suppose, in an immovable constancy and fidelity to our religion, in *holding fast the form of sound words*, and *contending earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints;* not enduring either to be huffed or wheedled out of the profession of truth. For as Christians, we take up our religion with this condition, to die for it rather than to part with it: but as Christian pastors, Christianity itself is more peculiarly recommended to our care, to be preserved entire and inviolable, and as such to be handed down by us to the generations to come. So 1 Tim. vi. 20. *O Timothy, keep that which was committed to thy trust:* which elsewhere he thus expresses; *Hold fast the form of sound words*, or the true Christian faith committed to thy charge, 2 Tim. i. 13. And in order to his so doing, he charges him, not only to be careful to preserve it himself, but also *to commit it to faithful men*, that is, to faithful pastors, *who should be careful to teach it to others also*, 2 Tim. ii. 2.

Thus God delivered in trust his holy mind and will to the primitive pastors, by them to be handed down entire and pure to their successors, and so on through all succeeding generations: and because he

foresaw that it would necessarily contract soil and corruption, by being delivered down through so many impure hands; therefore he hath bequeathed to us the holy scripture for a standing rule, whereby each succeeding generation might be able to reform the profession of it from the errors and corruptions which it should contract in its passage down from the generations before them.

And thus hath Christianity been derived down to us of this generation, viz. by the constant and courageous profession of all the preceding pastors of the church, regularly reformed by the rule of scripture, from the corruptions it had contracted in its descent through the ages before us. And as we owe our Christianity to the constant profession of preceding pastors, many of whom have sent it down to us sealed with their blood; so we owe the delivery of it, by our constant profession of it, down to succeeding generations: in which if we fail, we are not only false and perfidious to the most sacred trust that ever was committed to men; but, so far as in us lies, we stop the current of our holy religion down to succeeding ages, and do our best endeavours to intercept this heavenly light, which hath shone down to us from our predecessors, from shining down from us upon our successors.

6. and lastly, Another excellency wherein pastors are to be exemplary is in purity; that is, in abstaining from all fleshly lusts, from worldly-mindedness, intemperance, and wantonness: for the great design of the religion we teach, is to abstract and wean men from sense and sensual enjoyments; that thereupon they may acquire a sincere relish of divine and

spiritual goods, which are the great entertainments upon which they must live for ever; that so, when they leave this world of sensual things, they may carry hence with them such grateful pretensions, and foretastes of the joys and pleasures of the spiritual world, as to be able to live contented with and happy upon them to eternal ages. And this being the great design of the religion we profess and teach, we are peculiarly concerned to teach it by our example, as well as by our doctrine: otherwise it will be thought by those that hear us, that we persuade them to a spiritual life for no other end but only to get the monopoly of sensual enjoyments to ourselves. Wherefore, in order to the advancing this great design of our religion, it is necessary that by purifying ourselves from sensual lusts, and by the example of our heavenly-mindedness, we should endeavour to convince our people that we do not place our happiness in the gratifications of our sense; but that we look upon ourselves as born to higher hopes, and that our great expectation is beyond the grave.

Having thus despatched the first thing I proposed, which was to shew what or who those pastors are that are according to God's own heart, I shall touch very briefly upon the second, viz.

II. How much such pastors do conduce to the glory, and beauty, and perfection of the church, as such, principally consists in the following particulars:

First, In soundness of faith.

Secondly, In purity of worship.

Thirdly, In vigour of discipline.

Fourthly, In unity of communion and affection.

Fifthly, In sanctity of manners. To all which such pastors as are according to God's own heart do very greatly conduce.

First, In soundness of faith: to which there is nothing can more conduce than pious and learned pastors; who being not only purged from those vicious affections which are wont to seduce men into errors and heresies, and not only inspired with an hearty zeal for truth, but also accomplished with parts and learning to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and to separate the innovations of false teachers from the ancient truths of Christianity, cannot but be highly instrumental to the restoring the faith of their churches, wherever they find it corrupted and sophisticated, to its primitive lustre and simplicity.

Secondly, In purity of worship: for the end of all church-assemblies being to worship God, and the worship of God consisting in a devout acknowledgment of the infinite perfections of his nature, by such internal and external acts as right reason and revelation directs; to be sure, all such as are truly devout, and sincerely affected with the divine perfections, must look upon themselves as greatly concerned to worship God in such manner as is most suitable to his will and nature; that so, instead of making an honourable acknowledgment of his perfections in their worship, they may not seem to ridicule and disgrace them.

And this the pastors of the church are more peculiarly concerned in; who, being the guides and directors of the public worship, must, if they are truly pious, be very jealous of the worship of God, to see it maintained in or restored to its primitive purity and

perfection: and consequently, if they are judicious as well as pious, and can distinguish between true worship and false, to be sure, where they find it true and pure, they will use their utmost endeavour to preserve it so; and take all possible care that it be neither defaced with superstition nor blended with idolatry for the future: and where they find it hath contracted rust and corruption, will be no less solicitous to restore it to its native lustre.

Thirdly, A church's glory and perfection consists also in the vigour of its discipline, in the just and vigilant administration of the power of the keys, in admonishing such as go astray, in excluding them the communion of the church, if they continue obstinate, and re-admitting them upon their repentance: which power our Saviour committed to the hands of his apostles, and was from them derived to the bishops their successors, as a spiritual rod, to chastise and reduce those straggling sheep of their flocks, upon whom the gentle methods of religion should prove ineffectual: and in those purer ages of the church, wherein this power was maintained in its due and regular exercise, and it was not prostituted to serve human passions and secular ends, it very rarely failed of its designed effect. And to this day, in the Greek church, where the spiritual censures are administered, though with great corruption, by those in whose hands our Saviour and his apostles deposited it, there is no corporal coercion whatsoever so tremendous to the people, as that of excommunication; and this not without just reason.

For if men have any reverence for the authority of Christ, or any dread of his tribunal; doubtless, to be justly excluded from his kingdom upon earth, and

from the privileges and communities thereof, by those whom he himself hath empowered to exclude, must, in their esteem, be the next degree of punishment to their being actually excluded from his kingdom in heaven. Whenever therefore this power falls into the hands of such bishops and pastors, as do not only apparently derive it in a lineal succession from our Saviour, but will also take care to administer it with prudence, equity, and justice; the dread of it must needs be a mighty influence upon the lives of all such Christians as have any regard to the authority of God and our Saviour.

Fourthly, A church's glory and perfection consists in unity of communion and affections; so that there be no schisms in the body; but that all its members, being incorporate in the same communion, be knit and fastened to one another by the ligaments of mutual love and charity: to which excellent effect there is nothing in the world can more conduce than learned, prudent, and pious pastors; who, by wisely stating the different opinions upon which men divide, will set them nearer together; and in many cases reduce the controversy to a mere quarrel about words: who, by prudent expedients, will so adjust and temper the different interests of differing parties, as to render them fairly consistent: who, by the gravity of their discourse, and the integrity and obligingness of their behaviour, cannot fail to wind themselves into the esteem and affections of both parties; whereby they will be the better enabled to sweeten and influence their mutual animosities, and to reduce them to a better understanding of one another. In a word, who by their gentleness to the froward and peevish, their condescension to the innocently preju-

diced, and their honest moderation to all, will be continually pouring a soft and healing balm into the bleeding wounds of their churches; and, if it be possible, so effectually mediate between the divided parties, as at length to unite them in the same communion, and cement their divided hearts and affections.

Fifthly and lastly, The glory and perfection of a church consists also in sanctity of manners; to promote which also nothing can be more conducive than pastors according to God's own heart. For, first, their being commissioned from God, in a continued visible succession from our Saviour, to teach and govern his flock, must give their doctrine a very great authority in the minds of all that have any reverence for God, and thereby render it more prevalent and effectual: and then their doctrine, supposing they are pious and learned, will be throughout holy, and in all points tending to promote the interest of piety and virtue: and above all, their holy doctrine will be backed and enforced by their holy examples, which will preach more effectually than their tongues. For whereas precepts and discourses of virtue are only the dead pictures and artificial landscapes and descriptions of it; a virtuous example is virtue itself informed and animated, alive and in motion, exerting and exhibiting itself before our eyes in all its natural charms and graces. And therefore, as we know a man much better when we see him alive and in action, than when we only see his picture; so virtue and piety are much better understood and better loved by men, when they see them living and acting in holy examples, than when they only hear them described and pictured in virtuous precepts and dis-

courses. When therefore their pastoral authority, their doctrine and example, shall all conspire to advance the interest of piety and virtue in the world, to be sure they must have a powerful influence upon the lives and manners of men.

What then remains, but that you, the right reverend and reverend pastors of the church, in whose power it is to do such a world of good, make it your great endeavour to approve yourselves pastors according to God's own heart. Blessed be God, our church hath hitherto abounded with such pastors, as have not only been sent forth by bishops, who in an uninterrupted succession have derived their authority to send them, from the apostles, as they did theirs from our Saviour, (and hitherto, God be praised, our church hath known no other,) but have also been as renowned for their learning and profound science in religion, and as conspicuous examples of true substantial piety and virtue, as any that any church in the world can boast of: and by the great earnest he hath this day given us, of his kind intentions for the future, we have encouragement to hope that he will not only continue, but multiply them, and still more and more improve the glory of our church, by giving her more and more pastors after his own heart; that so, under their wise and pious conduct, she may not only continue what she is, viz. by many degrees the best and purest church in the world, but may still increase in strength, and beauty, and perfection; and that she that hath borne the shock of so many angry storms may still stand firm, like a rock of adamant, against the noisy billows that are driven against her, and still force them to retire in empty

foam and fury; till by their vain attempts they have wearied themselves into smaller waves, and are at last composed into a calm. For which end, *grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so ordered by thy governance, that thy church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

SERMON X.

PREACHED

AT THE FUNERAL OF SIR JOHN CHAPMAN, LORD MAYOR OF LONDON, AT ST. LAWRENCE'S CHURCH, MARCH 27, 1689.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 1.

—*And the day of death, than the day of one's birth.*

IN the former part of this book, the Preacher treats of the many false ways men take to their own happiness; and now he comes to describe the true way and method of attaining it. In general, he all along supposes that the best state of happiness in this world is exceeding imperfect; and that therefore, in order to our being in any measure happy, it is necessary we should not expect more from things than their nature and circumstances will afford, but content ourselves to take men and things as we find them: the former with all their uncertainty and inconstancy, the latter with all their faults and miscarriages; since it is not in our power to alter their nature, and render them as we would have them.

And as for the particular directions he gives, they are reducible to this general, that in order to our being in any degree happy in this world, it is necessary we should change our mind, and thoughts, and opinions of things, and embrace some such propositions, for the truest and most indubitable maxims, which we have hitherto looked upon as the wildest

paradoxes; namely, that *mourning* is in many cases to be preferred before *feasting*, ver. 2, 3, 4. *rebukes* before *commendations*, ver. 5, 6. the *end*, or final issue of things, before the *beginning*, ver. 8. a *patient* and *constant* endurance of injuries and affronts before a *peevish and haughty mind*, ver. 9. *wisdom* before *riches*, ver. 11, 12. and, to name no more, that *a good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth*, as you have it in the text.

I shall not trouble you with any account of the connection between these two comparisons, *A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death* is better *than the day of one's birth:* the latter of which I have chosen for the subject of my ensuing discourse, *The day of death* is better *than the day of one's birth:* which, though it may seem a very odd paradox at first view, (to men who place all their hopes in this life, and act as if all the consequents of their death were as indifferent to them as the antecedents of their birth,) is yet a very apparent and momentous truth; a truth that hath not only evidence enough in it to challenge our belief, but also moment enough to be one of the principles of our practice. Nor is it the peculiar sentiment of our Preacher; for, as Valerius Maximus tells us, (ii. 6.) the whole nation of the Thracians, which justly challenged the praise of wisdom, was wont to celebrate the birth of men with *mourning*, and their death with *joy;* and this they did without being instructed by teachers, purely upon their own observation of the state and circumstances of human life. And accordingly Euripides proposes this custom to the world as just and reasonable;

Τὸν φύντα θρηνεῖν ὅσ' εἰς ἔρχεται κακὰ,
Τὸν δ' αὖ θανόντα καὶ πόνων πεπαυμένον
Χαίροντας εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.

i. e. To lament those that are born, upon the account of the many evils among which they enter at their birth: but when they die, and rest from their labour, to celebrate their funerals with rejoicing and praises: all which proceeds upon the truth of this maxim, *That the day of death is better than the day of one's birth.* For the proof of which, it will be needful to consider our birth and death under a threefold notion, or respect:

I. Simply as an entrance into and exit out of human life.

II. As an entrance into a vicious and impenitent life here, and an exit into a miserable life hereafter.

III. As an entrance into a pious and virtuous life here, and an exit into a happy immortality hereafter. In all which respects and considerations I shall endeavour to shew, that our death is preferable before our birth and life.

I. We will consider our birth simply as an entrance into human life, and consequently our death as an exit out of it: for birth and death are the two boundaries of the race of human life: the former is the post from whence it starts, the latter the goal at which it stops: and as thus considered, death is preferable upon three accounts.

1. Upon account of the evils from which it delivers us.

2. Upon account of the goods in which it instates us.

3. Upon account of the hopes and fears arising from both.

1. Upon account of the evils from which it delivers us: for life considered barely in itself, or under the simple notion of self-activity, is neither good nor evil; but only as it is the principle of our sense of good and evil. A plant hath life as well as we; but its life being wholly insensible, it is never the better or the worse for it; because it neither perceives any good, nor feels any evil in living. To those creatures therefore that have sense with life, it is good or evil for them to live in proportion to the goods and evils which they are sensible of, and do feel and perceive. If they are sensible of more good than evil, it is good for them to live; but if they perceive more evil than good, it is evil for them to live. If therefore it be made appear that human life hath generally more evils than goods, more pains than pleasures in it, our reason may justly pronounce what Jonas's passion did, *that it is better for us to die than to live.* And that this is our case is evident by too many woful experiments. For from those very seeds of mortality that are sown in our natures, there spring up an infinite number of diseases, that frequently render our whole life a continued torment to us. Sometimes we are drowned in dropsies; sometimes scorched with fevers; sometimes torn with catarrhs and phthisicks; sometimes racked with gout, or stone, or strangury. To-day we are weary; to-morrow hungry or thirsty; next day either pinched with cold, or smothered with intemperate heat. Now we are tortured with some acute disease; anon we are forced to torture ourselves for prevention. Thus griefs, and troubles, and

diseases twist themselves about our life, as the ivy about the oak, till they have exhausted all the sap of it, and caused it to wither away, and die. But yet it must be owned, that though there is no happiness in this life so pure, but what hath a great deal of alloy and intermixture; nor none so blessed, as to be totally exempt from pain, and crosses, and disappointments; yet it cannot be denied but that Providence hath a great many favourites in this world, who spend the greatest part of their lives in ease and pleasure, and for every painful moment they endure are compensated with a thousand joys and satisfactions. *There are no bands in their death,* as the Psalmist expresses it, *but their strength is firm: they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than their heart could wish. These are they who prosper in the world, and increase in riches.* Psalm lxxiii. Now as for such as these, life indeed is highly desirable; because it entertains them with far more goods than evils; but these, alas! seem privileged from the common fate of mortals; and therefore the Psalmist might well say, *they are not plagued like other men:* for considering how many there are that consume their lives in perpetual toil and drudgery, and have no other reward for their many hours' labour, but a short hungry meal, and a few hours' sleep and insensibility; how many that are oppressed with slavery, harassed with cruelty, pined with want and poverty, overwhelmed with shame and infamy; that are wasted with long sicknesses, outworn with lingering pains, consumed with vexation, sorrow, and anxiety of soul; that are stung with remorse, racked with horror and

despair, alarmed with perpetual fears and dismal expectations; I doubt, all these put together, into one number, make the much greater part and generality of mankind. And though to many of these miserable ones the divine providence indulges frequent intervals of ease, satisfaction, and pleasure; though it spices and sweetens their bitter cup with some grateful intermixtures, to make the nauseous draught of life go down with them more easily; yet whenever they compare the few goods they enjoy with the many evils they suffer, and equally balance their pleasures with their pains, their hopes with their fears, their successes with their crosses, and their enjoyments with their disappointments; I make no doubt but they will find the latter turn the scale with a great deal of overweight: and when the evils of human life do thus surmount the goods, and its sense is oftener impressed with pain than with pleasure, it is a plain case that death is a release and deliverance.

2. If we consider our birth simply as an entrance into this life, without any respect to another, death is preferable to it upon account of the good in which it instates us. It is true indeed, human life hath its pleasures as well as its pains; but these, alas! in their variety, are so scanty and few, that a very short time suffices us to make a through experiment of them all: and when we have done this once, all our following pleasures are nothing but dull repetitions of the same things. For the main of the pleasures of human life are transacted within the short space of twenty-four hours: so that in almost all the rest of our age, we do nothing else but only tread the same stage over and over, the same enjoyments al-

ways returning within the same compass of time. So that after we have been entertained a few years with nothing but the same returning pleasures, our appetite to them is quickly cloyed, and at length we rise from them with loathing and satiety: but then, alas! in all this narrow circle of pleasures, the greatest part is little else but a mere privation of pain and misery; and it is not so much a positive good that pleases us, as the removal of some afflicting evil. Thus ease and rest are only so far pleasing to us, as they remove our pain and weariness: for when these are removed, the pleasure is over, and in a little time we are weary again of our rest and ease, till pain and weariness return and sweeten them, and give them a new and grateful relish. And so when we are weary of rest, we are fain to recreate ourselves with action; and when we are weary of action, we are fain to refresh ourselves with rest; and so round and round again in the same circle. Thus eating and drinking are only so far pleasant to us, as they assuage the pain of our hunger and thirst; and when this is removed, the pleasure ceases; and till it returns again upon us, we cannot eat or drink with pleasure. So again, the pleasure of health consists in not being pained or diseased; the pleasure of recreation, in being diverted from the toil and hurry of business. And as for the phantastic pleasure men take in heaps of wealth, heights of preferment, and puffs of popular applause, there is very little real in it, beyond a mere privation of the miseries of want, scorn, and infamy. Thus most of the pleasures of human life are only so many short reprieves from the griefs, troubles, and displeasures of it, so many intermissions of its pains and diseases. And the

main of all our happiness here consists in not being sensible of misery; of which, if we had never lived, we had never been sensible; and when we die, we shall never be sensible more; that is, supposing death to be an utter extinction of all life, both here and hereafter, which is the notion under which I am now considering it: and then, whereas our present indolence, or insensibleness of misery, is at best but partial and imperfect, (for to our profoundest ease there always clings some uneasy circumstance; our highest pleasures have always their appendant stings, and our sweetest gusts their bitter farewells,) death instates us in a perfect insensibleness, and cures us at once of all diseases: when we go down to make our beds in the dust, there we sleep on in an entire indolence; there are no midnight qualms, no convulsive starts or melancholy dreams, to discompose our rest; but all is hush and still, soft and quiet round about us; *There the wicked cease from trouble*, as Job expresses it, *there the wearied are at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressors. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master*. Job iii. 17. Seeing therefore that death renders us entirely insensible of pain and misery; and the best of life, even the pleasure of it, is little else but a non-perception of pain, and that a partial one too; it hence follows, that death, considered in itself, and without respect to the consequence of it, is really preferable to life.

3. Death is also preferable to life upon account of the hopes and fears arising from the goods and evils in both. For if there be no good to be hoped for in this life, which is not reasonably to be expected in

death; if there be no evil to be dreaded in death, which is not more to be dreaded in life, then it is plain that death is preferable before it. But, I beseech you, what great good doth your hope propose to you in living? Is it that you may pamper your lusts and entertain their voluptuousness a little longer? the meaning of which is no more than this, that you may appease the rage of your own desires with a short enjoyment that will but the more inflame them; and that when they are more inflamed, you may appease them again with the same enjoyment; that is to say, you would fain be eased from the importunate cravings of an insatiable appetite, from which, when all is done, there is nothing will perfectly ease you but a mouthful of earth; and that, by extinguishing the appetite, will for ever satisfy its craving, and then you will be perfectly at rest. For which is the greater good, I beseech ye, never to hunger at all, or to endure the pain of hunger only for the pleasure of eating? Doth not the impatience of your desire, which is a pain, generally abide a great deal longer on your appetite than the pleasure of satisfaction? and do you not find, upon an equal comparison of both, that the length of the pain of your desire doth more than countervail the pleasure of your enjoyment? But now in death all desire ceases; and so what you lose in being deprived of the pleasure of satisfaction, you gain with advantage in being cured of the pain of desire. Or would you live, that you may get more plentiful estates? the meaning of which is no more than this, that you would fain be farther removed from the want of the necessaries and conveniences of life, and translate yourselves to such a distance from wretched indigence, as that it

never may be able to reach you. But this, alas! you can never hope to do, till you are translated into the grave. For if you were never so rich, there are a thousand accidents in this life that can strip and despoil you of all, and render you as poor and indigent as ever. But when you are dead, you are beyond all want, because you are beyond all appetite and desire: for they that have no hunger can want no food; and they that feel no need can need no supply. Once more; Would you live longer, that hereafter you may live more at ease, more free from toil, and labour, and fatigue? Alas, poor man! is it rest thou seekest? Go seek it in the grave;-for there it dwells, not here. You strangely mistake, if you imagine that there are any circumstances here so easy as to be totally exempt from fatigue and uneasiness. But in the grave all is perfectly still and quiet: there are no cares nor fears, no hurryings nor scramblings, no justling nor countermining one another; but all the once busy actors are there hushed into perfect rest and repose. Thus the main of all the goods that we hope for in life are only to be found in death. But then, on the contrary, what great evil is there that you dread in death? Is it that you must part from your friends, and never enjoy their conversation more? And what then? Are you not many times fain to part with your friends here upon far worse terms than death? How many friends have you been forced to part with upon their treachery and falsehood, upon their disingenuous usage, barbarous affronts, and unjust provocations? And how do you know but ere long you may be forced to part from the friends you are now so loath to part with, upon the same terms? When you go to the grave indeed

you will have no friends to advise, or comfort, or assist ye: but then, as you will have none, so you will need none; for as there are no difficulties in the grave, so there can need no counsels; as there are no distresses, so there can need no comforts; as there are no pretensions, so there can need no assistances: and then, as you will have no true friends to advise, or comfort, or assist you, so you will have no false ones to abuse, aggrieve, and betray you: and to be delivered from these, is, I doubt, generally speaking, at least a sufficient recompense for the loss of those. But, O! when you die, you must leave the company of men, converse and talk no more, laugh and rejoice no more; but be laid up in everlasting darkness and silence. And what then? as you will leave behind you the society of men, so you will leave the desire of their society; and what you cease to desire, you will cease to want; and when you cease to want it, what harm will it be to be deprived of it? But then, as you will be deprived of the pleasure of human society, so you will also be delivered from the trouble and vexation of it: you will no more be grieved with the falsehood and treachery of it, no more be harassed with the follies and impertinencies of it, no more be teased with the peevishness and insolencies, the discords and wranglings of it; but be for ever removed out of all the tedious noise and vexatious tumults that attend it. And what if you cease to laugh, to rejoice, and to be merry, you will also cease to weep, and sigh, and groan; and, I am apt to think, if you could so compound the business of life, as to part with all the joys of it to be discharged from all the sorrows of it, it would be at least a saving bargain. But, alas! when you come

to die, you must be sick, and in pain, and undergo many a mortal pang and convulsion, before your tough heartstrings and eyestrings will crack. This may be indeed, and it may not be: but suppose the worst; are there no pains in life as well as in death, no aching of head or griping of bowels; no tortures of gout, or stone, or strangury? I am sure you most of you know the contrary by woful experience: and I am apt to think that, upon a just computation, one year's pains of the most easy life you can hope to lead will be found equivalent to a few days' pain of the most uneasy death. If then the evils we fear in death are generally greater in life, and the goods we hope for in life are to be found with greater advantage in death; then certainly, if we consider our birth and death merely as our entrance into and exit out of life, it is, generally speaking, better to die than to be born.

II. And so I pass on to the second notion or respect under which we are to consider our birth and death, viz. as an entrance into a wicked and impenitent life here, and an exit into a miserable life hereafter. The truth of it is, our life and death, considered merely in themselves, are things so very indifferent, that they are goods or evils, blessings or curses to us, as we improve and make them: for it is only in respect to the happy or miserable life beyond this, that to live or die is a good or evil: if we live so here as to entitle ourselves to a happy life hereafter, we hereby render our life an inestimable blessing to us: for, besides that by living soberly, righteously, and godly, and thereby entitling ourselves to live happily for ever, we render our present being far more easy and comfortable; besides that

we escape the pains and diseases, the vexations and incommodities, to which vicious courses do almost necessarily expose us, and acquire a far more sincere and grateful relish of the pleasures and comforts of this life: besides this, I say, we entail upon our present life a future reward so immense, as is abundantly sufficient to make us amends for all the evils and calamities of it: and upon these accounts, and these only, it is, that the prolongation of our life is in scripture represented and promised as a blessing. But if, on the contrary, we so live here, as to entail upon ourselves a life of eternal wretchedness and misery hereafter, we render our lives the greatest plague and curse to us. For how jovial soever our present being may be, it is at best but a short comical prologue to an everlasting tragedy. And if we would escape all the mischiefs that are naturally incident to vice, and reap only the pleasures, yet it would be far better for us never to have lived at all, than to live happily for a few moments, so as to live miserably for ever. If therefore our birth prove only an entrance to a wicked and impenitent life, we have only one of these three things reasonably to wish for: first, that we had never been born; seeing it would have been a thousand times better for us never to have been at all, than to be only in a tolerable condition for a few moments, and then to be miserable for ever. But since we are born, and it is in vain for us to wish that what is had never been, the next good we have to wish for is, that we may never die; seeing, how undesirable soever our present being is, it is certainly far more desirable than hell; and it is much better for us to lead a life worse than death, than to die into everlasting horror

and despair. But since it is in vain for us to wish that we may live for ever here, it being irrevocably appointed for all men once to die; the next reasonable object of our wishes, (that is, supposing we sin on, and never repent,) is, that we may die quickly, seeing all the while we live we shall but treasure up more wrath against the day of wrath, and heat the furnace of our future torment still hotter and hotter: for all the time we live here, supposing that we still live wickedly, we are only adding new items to our account, and inflaming the reckoning of our future punishment: and therefore, unless we at length repent and amend, it were far better for us to die now, than to live twenty years longer. For if we die now, we shall have much less to answer for, much less guilt to expiate, and consequently much less punishment to endure. Whereas, if we live twenty years longer, we shall but add twenty years' sin and impenitence to our account; which will make such a dreadful addition to our punishment, that all the possible pleasures we can reap from our twenty years' sin will be infinitely short of making us amends for it. Wherefore considering our birth as an entrance into a wicked life, and consequently our death as an exit into an eternally miserable one; it is apparently better for us, seeing we must die at last, to die now, than to live.

III. And lastly, We will consider our birth as an entrance into a pious and virtuous life, and consequently our death as an exit into an happy immortality hereafter. The best thing in human life is piety and virtue: without which, it is all a mere wilderness, an empty flat parenthesis of time, clasped in on either side with eternity: but he who lives piously

and virtuously, lives a life worth the living; a life that ere long will terminate in a glorious immortality. And to lead such a life is richly worth the while to be born: because the end and expiration of it is only a second birth into an endless life and happiness. Upon which account, though a pious life is of all others the best and most excellent life; yet is the death that concludes it far more eligible and advantageous, and that upon these four accounts:

1. Because it puts us into a far better state of health and vigour.

2. Because it instates us in far better enjoyments.

3. Because it translates us to far better company.

4. Because it fixes us in a far more certain and permanent possession of all.

1. Because it puts us into a far better state of health and vigour. For though there is no doubt but an exact virtue and regularity of life is a very great preservative from many of the diseases and infirmities that are incident to mortality, as well as a very strong cordial to support us under them; yet we find by woful experience that it is no exemption from them, or infallible antidote against them. The best men have oftentimes but a very crazy health, and do languish out their days in a great deal of pain and uneasiness; and even in their most healthy and vigorous state they have their sickly intervals, their wearisome days and sleepless nights, their gripes and qualms, and painful oppressions; and a great part of their life is so very grievous and afflictive, that it would be an ease to them to be insensible: and, which is the worst of all, such is the vital union be-

tween their flesh and spirit, that they always mutually sympathise with each other; so that whenever the one is weary, or sick, or pained, the other faints, and droops, and languishes: by reason of which, whenever their body is indisposed, it is a clog and burden to their souls, that, instead of assisting, hampers and entangles it in all its best and noblest operations; and even in the exercise of her religion (which, when she is free and vigorous, is incomparably the most delightful sphere of action) renders her dull, supine, and listless.

Thus in this mortal state we are well neither in body nor soul: and whilst this nimble and active spirit within us is confined to operate by these unwieldy organs of flesh, they will be more or less a constant check upon its natural vigour and activity. But when death shall part this ill-matched pair, and separate the living from the dead, the weary and heavy laden soul will presently find herself strangely at ease: and being at once released from all the encumbrances of this mortal state, and from all the annoyances of flesh and blood, she will immediately feel the natural strength of her own legs and wings, which before were hampered and benumbed, and with unspeakable nimbleness and alacrity mount up to the immortal regions; where being far removed out of the noise and participation of these bodily passions and grievances, she shall complain no more of a cloudy brain or an aching head, of wearied limbs, or drooping spirits, or oppressed bowels; but shall live for ever in perfect ease, health, and vigour. If therefore it be better to be well than sick, to be at ease than weary, to be sprightly and vigorous, than dull and listless; then certainly it is incomparably better

for a good man, that hath a right to a better life hereafter, to die than to live.

2. Because death instates us in far better enjoyments than any this life will afford. For in the highest enjoyments of this life there is far more of fantastry than of real good; as is evident from hence; because we always find that our imagination of things is much bigger than our enjoyment of them: and while we are in pursuit of them, we still fancy we shall be much more happy in them, than we find ourselves when we come to possess them. For such wretched counterfeits are most of these outward goods, that they will not bear the test of a long fruition: and how fair and big they may seem in the eye of our expectation, yet enjoying them presently rifles and deflours them. The first taste of them indeed is commonly very grateful to us; but after we have often repeated it, it grows flat, and after that, loathsome. When we have but little of what our appetite craves, we are not contented, but still impatient for more: and when we have our load of it, we loathe it. So that in reality our pleasures consist only in being restless, till we are weary; and displeased, till we can feel no pleasure. For till it hath pleased us, it is not a pleasure; and when it hath pleased us, it ceases to be so.

In short therefore, all that which we call pleasure and happiness here is only a great and eager expectation of pleasure. For no sooner have we tasted the objects of our expectation, but the pleasure dies; and so, like bees in a garden, we hum and rove about from flower to flower; and as soon as we have tasted one, and exhausted its sweetness, we leave it, and fly away to another; thus seeking in vain to eternize

our pleasure by a continued succession and circle of varieties. And now, methinks, after we have made so many trials of the truth of all this, we should at length grow impatient of being still imposed on by the same repeated imposture, and be weary of this scene of vanities, wherein we are thus perpetually tossed to and fro by our own unsatisfied desires, thus distracted by the uncertain motions of a ravenous appetite, and thus endlessly bewildered by following the roving dictates of a blind imagination, that would fain be happy, but knows not how. But if you cast your eyes beyond the grave into that state of life whereinto death admits you, there you will find a far more satisfactory account of things; there you will find pleasures that will abide with your palate, and well endure an everlasting fruition; that will not wither while you are smelling to them, and die away in your enjoyment of them; but rather improve upon your taste, and be growing eternally more and more relishing and grateful. For heaven is but one continued joy, one uninterrupted sensation of pleasure, which by pleasing grows more pleasant; and the longer it is enjoyed, the more it ravishes the enjoyer. And whereas our present pleasures, consisting in the vehement motion of our material sensories, are transient, and do quickly slip away, so that we must rest awhile before we can renew them, and begin the motion again; those heavenly pleasures are such as will indeed vehemently affect and move, but never weary the faculties of the enjoyer; nay, will be so far from spending and weakening them, that they will more and more strengthen and improve them: for they are all of them rational pleasures; and that which pleases true reason once, pleases it for ever; and still

the more it is enjoyed, the more it pleases; and where the good that is enjoyed is no less than God himself, who is not only a rational, but an infinite good, it must do so. For in the fruition of an infinite good, which can never be fully enjoyed by us finite creatures, but in an infinite succession of enjoyments, every new delight must raise a new desire, and every new desire find a new delight for ever; and so still the more we know of him, the more we shall love him; and the more we love him, the more we shall rejoice in him; and the more we rejoice in him, the more we shall know, and love, and rejoice anew: and in this blessed circle we shall move round for ever. Thus all the enjoyments of our future life are pregnant with eternal pleasures; such as, instead of being spent by fruition, will to all eternity be increased and multiplied: and if this be so, then certainly, for such as are prepared for heaven, and entitled to it, it is incomparably better to die than to live; seeing by death they only exchange the mean and trifling, the imaginary and fantastic enjoyments of this life, for such as are vastly greater and better.

3. Because death translates us to far better company than any we can here converse with. For considering the folly and degeneracy of human nature, there is no great good to be expected here from human society: but while we live among men, we must be content with such conversation as we find, and not always expect to find such as we would have. Sometimes we must be entertained with an empty, tedious din of impertinencies; and either be content to bore our ears to the slavery of attending to it, or to be accounted rude, or proud and conceited: some-

times we must bear with passion and peevishness, or live, like salamanders, in the fire of wrangling and contention: sometimes we must ruffle with insolence, or content ourselves to be always abused and borne down by it: sometimes we must guard ourselves against treachery and falsehood, and converse with caution and reserve, or be perpetually exposed to a thousand snares and mischiefs: sometimes we must endure the nauseous steam of fulsome ribaldry, or, which is worse, the horrid sound of profaneness and blasphemy; or else be hissed out of company, as pragmatic usurpers upon the freedom of human conversation: sometimes we must be plagued with the serpentine hissing and poisonous breath of detraction and calumny; and sometimes be cruciated with the malice and impertinence of backbiting and gossiping, of base and false inuendos, sly and injurious insinuations. We must sometimes see malice and treachery conducted under the banners of civility and friendship; pious ends pretended, to promote ambitious designs; charity and union extolled, to advance revenge and division; zeal for public good counterfeited only to serve private passions and interest: all which are high grievances to men of integrity and good nature: yet some or all these things we are fain to endure in most of our conversations with men. Here is society indeed! it would even provoke a wise and good man to cry out of it with the prophet, *Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. They bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the*

earth.—Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Blessed company this for a wise man to be fond of, or for the dear sake of it to be unwilling to die! especially considering to how much better company death introduces us, viz. into the company of blessed angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect; that is, into the company of the most refined spirits, the most wise and knowing, the most kind and benign, the most courteous and communicative, the most faithful and just, the most humble and meek; in short, the most every thing that can render company delightful and endearing: so that with them our conversation will be a perpetual intercourse of wisdom and love, fidelity and truth, without jealousy or design, caution or reserve; but all frank and open, heart with heart, and soul with soul. O blessed society! where every one is a friend to every one, and every friend hath in him all the accomplishments that can render a friend an inestimable jewel; where all are happy to their utmost wishes, and every one rejoices and shares in every one's happiness. Here is society indeed to our own heart's desire! society worth dying for, and, which is more, worth living for for ever. And if such be the society that death lets us into, I leave any man to judge, whether it be not much better for us to go away from hence, to leave this faithless, peevish, and ill-natured world, than to stay any longer, or converse any longer, like briers with thorns, where

there is nothing but rending and tearing on both sides.

4. And lastly, Because death fixes us in a far more certain and permanent possession of all. While we live here, how uneasily soever, we are still fond of living; but still we know that ere long we must die, and leave all that is dear to us upon earth; and the prospect of that, many times, gives us more trouble and disturbance than death itself. So that all the time we live, we are like those that live under the pain and torment of the stone; they know very well that they have but one remedy for their misery, and that is cutting; but this, alas! is hazardous and painful; and therefore, though they must come to it at last, yet they are extremely unwilling; they would fain have a little longer respite from their remedy; and so they still groan on, and still endure not only the pain of their disease, but also the painful expectation of the future incision: whereas, had they been cut at first, perhaps they had been long since cured of both. Thus we, while we are lingering out this wretched life, know very well that we have but one remedy, and that is death. But oh! cry we, it is a grievous one! And what then? We certainly know we must endure it at last; but yet we would fain live a little longer; that is, we would fain endure the pain of living, and the painful expectation of dying, a little longer. Whereas had we now but the patience and courage to undergo the dreadful operation, we should be released from both as soon as ever it is over, and in a few moments restored to eternal health and ease. And whereas while we live here, we are in a continual flow and reflow of things; at ease this moment, in pain the next; rich to-day, poor to-morrow;

now advanced to the top of the wheel, anon crushed underneath it; and so insecure of every good, that our prospect of being deprived of it still embitters our enjoyments; death translates us into an eternal possession of all desirable good, and sets us beyond the reach of both time and chance, in a state of being and happiness that admits no change or interruption; that is not to be measured by hours or moments, by years or centuries, or myriads of indictions, but runs on in an everlasting flux of duration; every part whereof is equally, because infinitely distant from a period. For that happiness in which death instates us being infinite, we shall always need as well as have, and always have as well as need an eternity of fruition fully to enjoy it. So that during every present moment of our happiness we shall feel ourselves possessed with eternal ages of happiness to come; and, together with every pleasure that we taste this moment, enjoy the foretaste of an eternity of pleasure, which will superadd an inconceivable sweetness and relish to it, and render it grateful and delicious beyond all imagination. Seeing therefore that death only prefers us from an uncertain and slippery possession of goods to a fixed and eternal one; if a continued happiness be better than an interrupted one, and everlasting joy than a moment's enjoyment; then certainly it must be better for us, incomparably better, to die than to live.

Having thus proved at large the truth of the proposition, I shall close up all with two or three inferences.

Inference I.

1. From hence I infer, how unreasonable it is for men to value themselves upon any of the present cir-

cumstances of this life: for if death in all these respects is preferable to life, then, to be sure, the best circumstances of this life are very mean and inconsiderable; much too mean for a man to value himself upon that is born to live for ever; seeing this mortal life is so very light and inconsiderable, as that even death itself (in the balance of reasonable estimation) outweighs it. He therefore that values himself by any thing but his immortal soul, by which he is for ever to outlive this poor inconsiderable life, and by those things which are its proper graces and ornaments, begins at the wrong end of himself, forgets his jewels, and estimates his estate by his lumber. And yet, good God! what foolish measures do the generality of men take of themselves! Were we not forced to it by too many woful experiments, it would be a hard thing for us to imagine that any reasonable creature, who believes himself compounded of a mortal body and an immortal soul, should be so ridiculous as to value himself by the little trifling advantages of a well-coloured skin, a suit of fine clothes, a puff of popular applause, or a large heap of white and red earth: and yet, God help us! these are the only things almost by which we value and difference ourselves from one another. You, forsooth, are a much better man than your neighbour, who is a poor contemptible wretch, a little creeping despicable animal, not worthy of the notice or cognizance of such a man as you. Why, in the name of God, sir, what is the matter? where is this mighty difference between you and him? Hath he not a soul as well as you, a soul that is capable to live as long, and to be as happy as yours? Yes, this you cannot deny: but, you thank God for it, you are, notwithstanding this,

an otherguise man than he; you have a much handsomer body than he; and, to your great comfort, it is apparelled too much more finely and fashionably: you live in a far more splendid equipage, and have a larger purse to maintain it; and your name is much more in vogue, and makes a far greater noise in the world. But is this all the difference between your mighty selves and this wretched neighbour of yours? Alas, poor man! a few days more will soon put an end to all this; and when once your rich attires are reduced to the windingsheet, and all your past possessions to six foot of earth, what will become of all these little trifles by which you value yourselves? where then will be the beauty, the wealth, the port, and garb, which you are now so proud of? Then this lovely body will look as pale and ghastly, this puffed and lofty soul will be left as bare, as poor, and naked, as this poor despised neighbour's: and should you now meet his wandering ghost in the vast world of spirits, what would you have to boast of more than he, now that your beauty is withered, your wealth vanished, and all your outward pomp and splendour shrouded in the horrors of a silent grave? Now you will have nothing to distinguish you from the most contemptible, unless you have wiser and better souls: and by how much the more you were respected for your beauty, wealth, garb, and equipage in this world; by so much you will be the more despised for your pride and insolence, sensuality and covetousness in the other. Let us therefore learn to value ourselves by that which will abide by us, by our immortal souls, and by those heavenly graces which do adorn and accomplish them; by our humility and devotion, our charity and meekness, our

temperance and justice; which are such preeminences as will survive our funerals, and distinguish us from base and abject souls for ever. But for an immortal soul to value itself by any of these temporary advantages is in the same degree ridiculous, as it was for the emperor Nero to value himself for being an excellent fiddler.

Inference II.

2. From hence I infer what little reason there is for men who have any good hope of a better life to be afraid of death: for if death itself be, upon a just computation, preferable to this life, why should that man be afraid of exchanging this life for death, who hath just ground to hope for eternal life into the bargain? If death be an advantage, considered only as it is an exit from the troubles of this life, how much more is it so, considered as it is an entry into the glories and beatitudes of the other! And therefore, if you will allow it to be unreasonable for sick men to be afraid of their recovery, for slaves to tremble at the news of a jubilee, for prisoners to be grieved at their gaol-delivery, how much more unreasonable is it for a good man to be afraid of dying, which to him is but a momentary passage from sickness to eternal health, from labour to eternal rest, from confinement to eternal liberty!

Consider, I beseech you, what great goods are there in this life that you have just reason to be fond of? what evils in the other, that you have any cause to be afraid of? Suppose that your departed soul were this moment upon the wing, mounting upwards towards the celestial abodes; and that at some convenient stand between heaven and earth, from whence you might take a full prospect of both, you were now

making a pause to survey and compare them with one another: suppose, that having viewed over all the glories above, that having heard the melodies of angels, and tasted the beatifical joy, you are now looking down again (with your minds filled and ravished with those glorious ideas) upon this miserable world, and that all in a view you beheld the vast number of men and women that at this time are fainting for want of bread; of young men that are bleeding under the sword of war; of orphans that are lamenting over the graves of their parents; of mariners that are shrieking in a storm, under the dismal apprehension of being stranded or foundered; of miserable people that are groaning upon sick beds, or racked with agonies of conscience; that are weeping with want, or mad with oppression, or desperate by too quick a sense of a continued infelicity. Suppose, I say, you had seen at two distinct views all those glorious things above, and those dismal things below, would you not be glad at your hearts that you were gone from hence, that you were out of the noise and participation of so many evils and calamities? Would you not be a thousand times more afraid of returning from thence, than ever you were of going from hence thither? Doubtless you would. Why then should not your experience of the miseries here, and your belief of the felicities there, produce in you the same effect, and make you cheerfully willing, whenever God pleases to call you, to exchange this wretched life for that blessed immortality?

Inference III.

3. And lastly, From hence I infer what is the proper end and use of living; namely, that it is so to live here, as that we may live happily hereafter.

For if death itself be better than this life, then it can be upon no other account good for us to live, than as we live in order to our living for ever. And indeed it seems very strange, that any reasonable beings should ever entertain such mean and sordid thoughts of themselves, such narrow scantlings of their own capacities, as to think that they were born to no other purpose but only to eat, and drink, and sleep, and wake, for twenty or thirty years together; and all this while to be only made the sport of an inconstant fortune, and bandied to and fro, like tennis-balls, upon the rackets of every cross turn and revolution of things; from pain to pleasure, and from pleasure to pain; from fulness to want; from honour to infamy, and so back again; and never to rest in one state till the game is played out, and then to return into eternal silence and insensibility. I profess, in my most serious thoughts, I cannot but wonder, that one who thinks so abjectly of himself should ever have the patience to outlive such a thought, to avoid the temptation of despatching himself out of this crowd and hurry of impertinencies, into the dark retirement of a quiet grave. For upon what other account can this vain wretched life be desirable, than as it is a state of trial and probation for immortality and happiness? And if upon this account alone it is desirable, O good God! how do those men cheat and abuse themselves, who build their tabernacles here, and aim at no other happiness than this present state of things affords; who, though they have capacities large enough for a heaven of immortal joys, faculties great enough to converse with angels, and communicate with them in their highest glories and beatitudes, can yet sit down tamely, satisfied with a

condition so wretched and miserable! In the name of God therefore, let us now at last remember, that we are born for higher things than these, for far more solid and substantial enjoyments: and considering this, for shame, let us rouse up ourselves, and shake off this sordid and degenerate temper, that makes us act so infinitely unbecoming the dignity of our rational and immortal natures. And since we are not only fitted for a higher happiness, but also assured of enjoying it, upon condition we qualify ourselves for it, by acquiring these heavenly dispositions of soul, without which it is impossible for us to relish it; let us now at length arise and dress ourselves for eternity, by first putting off our old man, with all its corrupt lusts and affections, and then putting on a new, which consists in repentance from dead works; in fervent love and profound veneration of God, and a sincere subjection to his heavenly will; in temperance, humility, and justice, and universal charity to all men. And when we have thus arrayed ourselves, thus excellently adorned and beautified our natures, we have lived to admirable purpose indeed; lived to live happily for ever, to accomplish ourselves for the eternal embraces of the God of love, and for the society and happiness of angels and of blessed spirits.

And so I have done with the text, and shall only add a few words upon the sorrowful occasion, viz. the funeral of sir John Chapman, late lord mayor of this famous city: and that I may not say any thing of him that shall look like flattery, or an overkind partiality to his memory, I will say nothing of him but what I am sure that all that knew him as I did will justify; and for those that knew him not, I am

sure, it will be highly uncharitable for them to contradict me. I cannot deny, but that as he was a man, so he had the frailties of a man, which common charity obliges us to bury in silence and oblivion: but with those frailties he had a great many excellent qualities, in which I heartily wish some men would be as forward to imitate him, as they have been to censure and traduce him: for I am sure, if they were, it would turn to a much better account to them, both here and hereafter. As for his religion, I speak it upon certain knowledge, he was a firm and hearty protestant of the communion of the church of England; that church which, however it may be now reproached and vilified by an ungrateful generation, was, not long ago, the fence of the English laws and liberties, and the only standing bank against the inundations of popery, when it was threatening to overwhelm us all: of this church was our deceased friend a cordial and an affectionate son; he loved its constitution, frequented its worship and communion; and could his honest zeal to it have permitted him to trincle with popery, (as some others did who made the loudest noise against it when there was no danger in view,) and given it but a helping hand to destroy those legal securities which stood in its way, and (under God's providence) were the only insuperable fence against it; he might have been, to my knowledge, lord mayor soon enough to have outlived his mayoralty: and how well and wisely he behaved himself in it, under the most difficult circumstances; how effectually he consulted the city's peace and security, when dangers environed her on every side; how equally he poised himself amidst all extremes; how prudently he weathered the

threatening storm of military force that hung over it; how happily he stemmed the difficult tide of popular commotion, which in other parts bore down all before it; will perhaps be remembered to his immortal honour, whenever a more grateful age succeeds. I know he hath been frequently charged with keeping secret correspondencies with the enemies of our laws and religion, and therein of betraying the great trust reposed in him. But this is a calumny as ridiculous as it is false: for how was it possible for a person of my lord mayor's figure to convey himself invisibly (as this story pretends sir John Chapman did) from one end of the town to the other, without the privity of his own numerous family, who knew nothing of the matter, or the cognizance of all that populous city between? But this I certainly know, that, so far as the laws of civility and duty would admit, he always industriously avoided all secret conversation; and made it the leading principle of his conduct, through all that difficult scene of affairs, to act upon no other secret orders or counsels, but what were first proposed and consented to by his worthy brethren of the court of aldermen. And as he thus acted upon the square in all his public administrations, so in his private capacity he was a person of unspotted integrity and justice in all his intercourses with men; one, who, as I verily believe, did never wilfully wrong any man in the world: of the truth of which, take one instance for all. He having, many years ago, had great dealings with a certain person, well known in this city, there remained a large account between them, which at length was evened, adjusted, and discharged on both sides: but several years after, he

having some occasion to review this account, found there was a great mistake in it, and that there remained a very considerable sum of money due to his correspondent; upon which he immediately goes and acquaints him with it, and pays him to the utmost farthing. An example of justice, which I would to God those men would imitate that make so bold with his memory. Nor was he less benign and charitable, than he was honest and just: for as he was a good neighbour and a hearty friend, so he was a general lover of mankind, always free and forward to render good offices to all that needed and craved his assistance.

And then, as for his alms, I must crave leave of his ashes to do a right to his memory, against his own inclinations: for in his lifetime he was so severe an observer of our Saviour's caution, *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men;* so utterly abhorrent of that pharisaical humour of performing his good works in a clear echo that might be sure to resound them after him in praises and commendations, that perhaps he too much affected privacy and concealment: and was so far from desiring that *his light* should glare out in vanity and ostentation, that he would not suffer it *to shine out* enough *before men*, to provoke them, by the sight of it, to glorify our common Father in heaven: for his charity ran underground in such secret channels, that some, I know, were apt to question whether the spring were not dry, or at least very scanty in its communications. But now he is gone, his memory, like the leaves of roses, smells sweet and fragrant after the rose is dead: for now that he is out of hearing, and those few that knew his charities, and those many

that were refreshed by them, dare own and attest them, without fear of offending his modest piety, it appears, by several hundreds of pounds which he gave in his life upon several charitable occasions, besides the charitable legacies he hath bequeathed at his death, that he was, not only in word, but in deed, a true benefactor to mankind. And then, as for his relative duties, he was that which every good man is, (and without which, it is fulsome hypocrisy for any man to pretend to religion,) viz. a kind and obliging husband, a tender and provident father, a courteous and benevolent master; and in all the degrees of his relation, a ready assistant, a useful friend, and a generous benefactor. Such was his life. And as for his last sickness, though it now and then interrupted the exercise of his reason, yet no sooner was it restored to him, but he gave all the indications of a truly pious and devout mind. He heartily lamented the failings of his life, and bound himself in new resolutions of amendment: he underwent his pains with a calm and constant mind, and seemed full of good thoughts and holy affections; full of hearty submissions and resignations to God: and in this excellent posture of mind he expired into eternity. Where, *God grant, that with him, together with all those that are departed this life in the true faith of Christ's holy name, we may all have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul, in everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord: to whom, with the Father and eternal Spirit, be ascribed all honour and praise, now and for ever. Amen.*

SERMON XI.

PREACHED

BEFORE THE QUEEN, MAY 22, 1692. UPON OCCASION OF THE VICTORY OBTAINED BY THEIR MAJESTIES' FLEET OVER THE FRENCH.

PSALM l. 14.

Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High.

IN the foregoing verses the Psalmist (whether he were David or Asaph, is uncertain) introduces God as delivering his own sense concerning the ritual and ceremonial religion of the Jews, upon which they so much valued themselves, and laid such mighty stress. Ver. 7. *Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee:* or, I have something of high moment to speak to thee, *I am God, even thy God;* that God who, under the title of *The Lord thy God,* brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and gave thee the moral law comprised in ten commandments. *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices and burnt offerings, to have been continually before me:* I know thou art exact enough in the observance of these my ritual commands; and therefore, as to this matter, I do not blame thee. But this is not the thing I chiefly value and esteem: it is the observance of my moral laws, in which thou art extremely defective, that I principally insist on. As for those sacrifices with which thou causest mine

altars continually to smoke, they are things with which (if I needed them) I could supply myself from the herds of a thousand hills which thou knowest not, and which are all my own. And so he goes on to the text, upbraiding them with laying the whole stress of their religion upon their exact performance of the instituted rites of it; which, though it was their duty, yet the least part of it. And then comes in the text, to acquaint them what was the main of their religion, which he principally intended, and was most delighted in, and wherein they were most remiss and negligent: *Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High:* i. e. If thou wilt bring me an acceptable sacrifice indeed, in the first place, bring me a truly thankful heart, that gratefully receives and acknowledges my benefits; and in the next place, perform to me those vows and promises of repentance and amendment which thou madest to me in thy affliction; when out of extreme want of the benefits I have since bestowed on thee, thou wast earnestly imploring them at my hands.

I shall at present only treat of the first of these, *Offer unto God thanksgiving;* which, according to the sense I have given of the text and coherence, is a duty of far more value with God, than any of the instituted rituals of religion, as being one of those moral and eternal duties in which the main substance of religion doth consist. In handling this argument therefore I shall endeavour these two things:

First, To shew you what this duty is, and wherein it doth consist.

Secondly, To shew you, that it is a moral duty, or, which is the same thing, a duty enforced with eternal reasons.

I. What this duty of thanksgiving is, and wherein it doth consist. In general, thanksgiving consists in rendering to our benefactors a cheerful acknowledgment of the benefits we have received at their hands; and consequently to offer thanksgiving to God, is freely, heartily, and cheerfully to acknowledge and recognise to him the manifold favours and benefits, which with a most liberal hand he bestows upon us from time to time. In order to which, it is necessary that we should diligently remark and attend to his benefits, and not suffer them to pass through our minds, like birds through the air, without leaving any track or path behind them; but that we should so curiously observe and take notice of them, that every footstep of them, if possible, may remain upon our memories in lively and lasting impressions. For though we can no more count the benefits of God, than we can the moments of eternity; and though whenever we enter into the recollection of them, we are like a man that is diving into the bottom of the sea, over whose head the water runs insensibly; so as that neither he is pressed with the weight of it, nor confounded with the number of the drops of it; because he attempts not to cast them up, but concludes them innumerable: yet there are many and many of the benefits of God which lie so open to our observation, being attended with such endearing and remarkable circumstances, as that without great stupidity we cannot but take notice of them. And therefore, in order to our being truly thankful to God, it is requisite that such as these should be drawn and imprinted upon our memories in strong and lively colours, not to be worn or washed out by time or chance; but to flourish there, if possible, like the pic-

tures of the Graces, in immortal youth. And as to our giving thanks to God for his benefits, as it is requisite that we should, so far as we are able, closely observe and remember them; so it is no less requisite, that by frequent reflections upon them, we should endeavour to raise in our minds a just value and esteem of them; and thereby to affect our own hearts with a warm and vigorous sense of the divine goodness, that inexhaustible fountain whence every good we receive is derived. And when with the close consideration of the favours and benefits of God, we have chafed our own souls into an affectionate feeling of his goodness, we may then cry out with David, *My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready, I will sing and give praise.* For the requisites beforementioned are only necessary dispositions and preparations to thanksgiving; they are only the tuning the strings of the musical instrument, and setting it in order for the angelical harmony to be played on it: but the thanksgiving itself consists in an affectionate acknowledgment to God of the manifold favours we have received at his hands; together with all those gracious circumstances, so far as we are able to recollect them, with which they came attended. Which acknowledgment is to be made, either in express words, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, or by recounting his favours to him in mental recognitions; which is to make melody in our hearts to the Lord. But because usually when the heart is full, the mouth will overflow; therefore thanksgiving, in common acceptation, signifies an oral and verbal acknowledgment of God's favours, arising from an inward and affectionate sense and feeling of his goodness towards us. And to crown all this, and render

our thanksgiving substantial and real, it must be accompanied with a hearty study and intention of soul, to render unto God for his favour all possible compensation, to gratify him with our free and cheerful obedience; and more especially, with our charity and beneficence towards his poor and indigent creatures; whose wants are the briefs by which God authorizes them to ask relief for his sake, and to receive it in his name. *He that giveth to the poor*, saith the Wise Man, *lendeth to the Lord;* and consequently, he that giveth not, refuseth to lend to the Lord; which is inconsistent with any degree of hearty gratitude towards him. For how can he be truly thankful to God for his favours, who hath no intention to render him any compensation? And what intention can he have to compensate God, who will not lend him a little money or a little bread, when by the mouths or necessities of his poor he craves it? This man compliments God instead of thanking him; and only flatters him with feigned lips, in hope thereby to obtain farther favours of him, without being at all influenced by an ingenuous sense of his goodness, to make him any returns for what he hath already received. So that the full import of our offering thanksgiving to God is to render him an affectionate acknowledgment of his manifold benefits, with an hearty intention to make him all the compensation for them we are able, by our constant and cheerful obedience to his heavenly will, and readiness to repay him in works of charity, according as our abilities and the necessities of the poor shall require it. And accordingly, the Psalmist himself thus explains this duty; *I will remember*, saith he, *thy works of old, and talk of thy doings.* And elsewhere, *My mouth shall*

praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, because thou hast been my help. Here is his advertence to and recollection of the mercies of God towards him. And then he goes on: *How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! How precious are thy thoughts unto me! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more than the sand.* Here is his high esteem and value of the divine benefits. Then he proceeds: *Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee; my soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness; my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.* Here is his affectionate sense of the divine goodness towards him. Then he breaks forth into raptures of thanksgiving: *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; with my mouth will I make known his faithfulness to all generations: I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works: I will praise the name of the Lord with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving.* And lastly, he closes all this with a hearty design of rendering to God these best and noblest compensations of his obedience and charity: *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?* And upon this inquiry resolves; *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord: I will pay my vows unto the Lord*; i. e. those vows of sacrifice, and alms of fidelity and obedience, which I made in my distress and affliction. And thus you see what is here implied in this duty of offering thanksgiving unto God.

I proceed now, in the second place, to shew you, that this is a moral duty, not founded upon positive

will and institution, as sacrificing was, which therefore could no longer oblige than during the continuance of that positive will; but upon eternal and immutable reasons, which no positive will can ever cancel or repeal: and this, I doubt not, will appear upon the following considerations:

First, The justice and equality of it.

Secondly, The pleasure and delightfulness of it.

Thirdly, The obligations it lays upon God to continue and repeat his favours.

Fourthly, The great aid and furtherance it gives us in all our other duties.

Fifthly, The mighty relish it gives to all God's favours and benefits.

Sixthly, The great support and confirmation it affords our faith and dependence upon God for the future.

I. Thankfulness to God is due to him in strict justice and equity: for the benefits God bestows upon us are rather loans than gifts; because, as he is supreme Lord of the world, he retains an unalienable propriety in every good he bestows; and upon that account he may justly demand of us whatsoever homage or quitrent he pleaseth: and certainly the least he can claim is our gratitude; from which we are so far from being released by the freeness of his gifts, that we are the more strictly obliged by it. For he who receives a benefit, whether it be from God or man, owes more or less for it, proportionably as the benefit is greater or less. Seeing therefore that a benefit freely given is, *cæteris paribus*, much greater than a benefit lent; it is certain that the freer we have it, the more we owe for it. Now as for the benefits of God, they are not only in them-

selves of greater value than what any other can give or lend us; but they are also given us upon the most free, and noble, and generous terms. For though when he bestows them upon us, he doth not, like other donors, give them away from himself, but reserves his inherent right in them, as lord paramount of all his creation; yet this reservation of his is no damage to us, seeing we enjoy his gifts as amply and freely as if he had alienated to us his right in them. Though he still continues sovereign lord of the fee, and every thing we hold, we hold as his tenants by his grant and in his right; yet the quitrent he requires of us (which is only our gratitude, and which in justice would have been due to him, though he should never have required it) is not only so very small and easy in itself, but also so highly advantageous to us, that instead of being impoverished, we are enriched by the payment of it: so that our tenure under him is far better for us than if we were freeholders, without any condition at all; the condition of this benefit being such as is so far from sinking the value of them, as that it very much raises and enhances them. So that as we stand in justice obliged to be grateful to all our benefactors, (seeing every benefit deserves of us as much as it is worth; and the smallest is worth our gratitude,) so more especially to God, who not only gives us all the good things we enjoy, but takes care also to give them to us upon the most beneficial considerations, viz. that we thankfully receive them; which if we duly perform, will prove far more beneficial to us, than all his other benefits.

II. Consider the pleasure and delightfulness of this duty. It is true, in other parts of devotion there is something that is painful and laborious to human

nature: for so prayer awakens in us a sorrowful sense of wants and imperfections; confession excites in us sharp and dolorous reflections upon our guilts and miscarriages; but thanksgiving has nothing in it but a warm sense of the mightiest love and most endearing goodness. For it is only the overflow of a heart full of love, the free sally and emission of a soul that is captivated and endeared by kindness; and there is no passion in human nature so sweet and ravishing as love; especially while being heated with the warm sense of the kindness of its beloved, it boils over upon it in praise and gratitude. And seeing our thanksgiving lives upon love and beneficence, and is all along nourished and maintained by it, the greater the love is upon which it feeds, and the more the beneficence, the richer its fare is, and the nobler its entertainment. But where can our gratitude find out a love comparably so great, or productive of such ample beneficence, as that of God's? Upon this inexhaustible subject it may live for ever without any other supplies; and fare deliciously every moment to eternal ages. For what more delicious or comfortable thought can ever present itself to the mind of man than this, that the great Lord of the world, the good, the wise, and mighty King of heaven and earth, is our faithful, kind, and munificent friend; that his heart is always pregnant with designs of love to us, and that the great subject of all his contrivances is to do us good here, and to render us glorious hereafter? O, were such thoughts as these but set home upon our hearts with their full and due emphasis, how would they even ravish and transport our souls! how would they convert all our faculties into consent and har-

mony, and even evaporate our spirits in songs of praise and thanksgiving to him! And whilst, from a lively sense of all these wonders of his love, we are offering up to him our sacrifice of thanksgiving, O with what triumph and exultation of soul should we ascend in the flames of it! But, alas! we are, even the best of us, in a great measure unacquainted with the pleasure and sweetness of this heavenly performance; and the reason is, because we have not a quick sense and lively relish of the divine goodness upon which it terminates. Had we this always present with us, we should feel so much joy and pleasure in thanksgiving, that it would be our heaven upon earth, our meat and drink, our business and recreation, to breathe up our souls to God in hymns of praise. But this we do all know, who know any thing of religion, that to laud and magnify the Lord is the end for which we were born, and the heaven for which we are designed; and that when we are arrived to that vigorous sense of the divine love that the blessed people of heaven have attained, we shall need no other, either employment or pleasure, to render us for ever happy, but only to sing eternal praises and *hallelujahs to our God and to the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne;* the vigorous relish of whose unspeakable goodness to us will so inflame our love and animate our gratitude, that to eternal ages we shall be never able to contain ourselves from breaking out into new songs of praise; and then every new song will create a new pleasure, and every new pleasure dictate a new song, and so round again for ever. But these are things too sublime for our short reach and cognizance: only at present let us but consult the experience of devout and grateful

souls about them; and this will assure us, that there is nothing under heaven so pleasant and delightsome as, from a warm and vigorous sense of the love of God, to breathe up our souls to him in praise and thanksgiving; that this gives such a jubilee to the mind, such a sprightful recreation to the heart, as far exceeds the most studied artificial pleasures of epicurism. But for satisfaction in this point we need go no farther than to our praiseful Psalmist, who, though he were a king, and had all the pleasures of a fruitful kingdom at his beck and command, yet doth upon his own experience advise, *Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant:* and elsewhere, *Praise the Lord, for it is good; to sing praises to our God it is pleasant, and praise is comely.* Seeing therefore that gratitude to God is so high a pleasure, and such a grateful entertainment to the rational soul, when it is duly disposed; this is such a motive to the practice of it, as carries with it an eternal force and obligation.

III. Gratitude to God mightily obliges him to continue and repeat his favours to us. For though God doth not covet our thanksgivings for himself, or out of any prospect of advantage they can bring him; he being so entirely happy in his own perfections, that neither the praises of angels can add any thing to him, nor the blasphemies of devils subtract any thing from him: yet when he so freely bestows his benefits upon us, he expects the return of our gratitude, both as it is highly just and reasonable in itself, and vastly beneficial and advantageous to us. For he being infinitely reasonable himself, and loving himself infinitely for being so, he cannot for his own

sake but love what is fit and reasonable in others; and what he so justly loves in us, he justly expects of us. It is highly displeasing to him to see us ungrateful to others, as well as to himself; not that he sustains any damage thereby: for how can he be the worse for our ingratitude to others? but the ground of his displeasure is, to see reasonable beings so grossly swerve from the canon of right reason and justice, and act so contrarily to the laws of his nature and their own. So again, he is as well pleased and delighted when he finds us thankful to our other benefactors, as when we are so to him; not that he can reap the least benefit or advantage from the thanks which we render to others: for how can he be the better for that which he doth not receive? but because the thing is just and reasonable in itself, and because whatsoever is so is amiable and delightsome in his eyes. And as God expects our gratitude for its own sake, as it is in itself a most just, and comely, and reasonable thing; so doth he also expect it for our sake, as it is one of the most advantageous things we can do for ourselves. For by accustoming ourselves to frequent returns of thanksgiving to God, we shall by degrees gain a thankful frame and disposition of soul, which (as I shall shew by and by) will both influence us in all other parts of our duty with a mighty cheerfulness and alacrity of spirit, and carry us on through the most wearisome stages of it with an indefatigable vigour, and also enhance the value of the divine benefits, and render them more precious in our esteem, and consequently more comfortable in our enjoyment. When therefore we receive the benefits of God with a thankful heart, he obtains both these ends upon us; which must

needs lay a strong obligation upon him to continue and multiply them to us. When he shall see that his favours are not sown upon a barren soil, but that they spring up in such fruits as are most delightful to himself, and most beneficial to us; what a powerful motive must this be to engage him to sow them more abundantly! There is nothing doth more oblige a generous benefactor, than to see a good use made of his benefits: and the best use we can make of them is to gratify him with such things as he most delights in, and to improve them to our utmost advantage: which will render him so far from repenting of his favours, and resolving to withhold them for the future, that it will be a mighty gratification to himself to repeat and increase them, whenever any just occasion requires it. And therefore, seeing God is the freest and most generous benefactor in the world, we may depend upon it, that if we make that good use of his benefits for which he designed them; if we render him such grateful returns for them, as are truly delightful to him, and advantageous to ourselves, he will be so far from stinting his hand to us for the future, that he will *rejoice over us to do us good*, and be as highly pleased to multiply his benefits upon us as we can be to receive them. In short, the greatest obligation that can be laid upon a generous goodness, such as God's is, is to do good with his benefits, and to fare well upon them; both which a thankful mind doth to the highest degree: and therefore such, and such only, are the proper soil for God to sow his benefits in. Here they will grow with vast increase and improvement: whereas in ungrateful minds they will either be soon washed away in a stupid oblivion of them, or soon

wither away in a sordid neglect of them, or else spring up only into weeds and tares, into pride or luxury, or vanity and vexation of spirit. This therefore is an eternal reason why we should offer up our thanksgiving to God; because hereby we answer the great ends for which he showers his benefits on us; and thereby lay a powerful obligation upon him to continue and increase them.

IV. Thankfulness to God doth very much promote and facilitate the practice of religion: for, as was shewn before, all hearty thanksgiving springs out of a warm and vigorous sense of God's goodness towards us: and as that naturally flows into praise and thanksgiving, so this flows as naturally into a free and cheerful obedience. The more thankful we are for the benefits of God, the more sensible we shall still be of our obligations to him; and the more sensible we are of these, the more disposed we shall be to gratify him by our ready obedience to him. These things follow as naturally one another, as heat follows fire, and as burning follows heat. He therefore who by frequent acts of praise hath acquired a thankful frame and disposition of soul, hath surmounted three parts in four of all the fatigue of religion. For what can be too hard for a soul that is inspired with an active sense of the divine goodness? This will convert the most painful duties into the most delightful recreations, and prove such an ever-flowing fountain of divine rhetoric within us, as will supersede the necessity of any other motives and arguments. How can I do too much, cries the grateful soul, for so kind a God and so liberal a benefactor? To his boundless goodness I owe all that I am, all that I have, and all that I hope for: to him I am indebted

for such stupendous favours, as, considering my unworthiness of them, doth not only puzzle my conceit, but outreach my wonder and admiration. And can I be so base as to reckon any thing too much in return for such astonishing kindnesses? I can give him back nothing but what I have received of him; and if I should give him back my life, or the dearest enjoyment I have in the world, I should not give him the thousandth part of what I have received. What then shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? Shall I not cheerfully render him whatever he asks, though it were greatly to my damage; though it were to strip myself of all the comforts of my life, to sacrifice my Isaac to him, yea, my own life and being? And much more, when he asks nothing of me but what is fit and reasonable; nothing but what is perfective of my nature, and conducive to my eternal happiness: when he only requires me to sacrifice my lusts unto him, which are the shame and scandal of my nature; to wash and be clean; to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world. O, far be it from me to deny such a bountiful friend such just and reasonable demands. This is the constant sense of a truly grateful soul. And being under the influence of such moving oratory and persuasion, with what cheerfulness and alacrity must she run the ways of God's commandments! How greedily must she catch at all opportunities of serving him, and how readily close with every intimation of his will, how contrary soever to the inclinations of flesh and blood! And instead of boggling at the difficulties of religion, O how will such a soul rejoice that she hath an opportunity in her hands to express, by the readiness

of her obedience, the grateful sense she hath of that goodness to which she is so infinitely obliged! Doubtless, were our hearts but touched with a quick sense of the goodness of God, this would carry us triumphantly through all the difficulties of our duty; and we should be so far, for the future, from complaining of the uneasiness of our yoke, that we should be ready to thank God upon our knees for putting such a test of duty on us, whereby we might have an opportunity to express our gratitude to him by the readiness of our obedience. Seeing therefore that thanksgiving is so great a furtherance to us in the course of our duty, to be sure, if we owe any thing to God, we must owe this to him, by an eternal obligation.

V. Thanksgiving to God will render all his favours to us more grateful and acceptable to ourselves. All benefits are greater or lesser to us, as they stand higher or lower in our esteem and valuation. To enjoy the light of the sun is doubtless in itself a very great benefit; but the commonness of it takes off our heedless minds from attending to it, and weighing it in the balance of a just valuation; by reason of which it grows cheap in our esteem, and we have no taste or relish of the pleasure and comfort of it, but enjoy it year after year with a perfect unconcern and indifferency. But if after a long blindness our sight should be instantly restored to us, or we should of a sudden be snatched up into the light, after a tedious confinement to some dismal dungeon; O, with what rapture should we salute the day, what hymns should we sing to the joyful light! With what cheerful thoughts would it inspire our breasts, and with what unspeakable joy should we

survey that glorious scene of things which it opens and discloses! And yet the benefit of light is the same to all that enjoy it: and if those who continually enjoy it had maintained in their minds the same just esteem of it as they have who are newly restored to it, they would always enjoy it with the same satisfaction. And the case is the same as to all the other benefits of God; of a great part of the comfort whereof we spoil and deprive ourselves, for want of that grateful sense and just esteem of them which they merit and deserve: for a thankful mind will make the utmost of the benefits it receives, and weigh them nicely by grains and scruples, and consider them in all their endearing circumstances, and take into its account their most minute appendages, to enhance its own value and esteem of them. And seeing it is our esteem of benefits that raises or sinks our enjoyment of them, to be sure, the higher we esteem the benefits of God, the more we must enjoy them. So that while unthankful souls, for want of a just estimate of the favours of God, do scarce enjoy the tithe of them, but whilst they feed on them are dissatisfied with them, and, like the most currish animals, while they are gnawing on their prey do grumble over it; those who are truly thankful feed upon every blessing with joy and content, and, like the industrious bees, having sucked out all the sweetness of the flowers they live upon, go singing home with it to their hives. And I make no doubt, but he who hath a grateful sense and just esteem of the goodness of God to him, enjoys with far more comfort even a cup of fair water and a brown morsel, than the fat ungrateful glutton doth his studied and artificial luxuries. Seeing therefore our

thankfulness to God for his benefits doth so much heighten and improve our enjoyment of them, if it be eternally reasonable that we should make the best of his benefits, this lays an eternal obligation on us to be grateful to him.

VI. And lastly, Thankfulness to God gives a great support to our hope and dependence on him for the future: for besides that the very sense and consciousness of the thankful returns we have made him will encourage us to hope, that that God who hath found us grateful for what we have received will account himself obliged in generosity, though not in justice, to heap his favours on us more abundantly; the thankful reception of past favours being the greatest inducement to generous benefactors to bestow more and greater for the future; besides this, I say, the very recollection and remembrance of the manifold favours of God which we have already received, and which our own grateful sense of them will be sure to engrave upon our minds in the most durable characters, will prove a constant fund of happy experience for our hope to live upon for the future: so that whenever we are reduced to strait and low circumstances, and are either pinched with the want of any necessary good, or are ready to despond of deliverance from any imminent evil, the grateful remembrance we retain of past instances of God's kindness to us will be a mighty encouragement to our faith and hope, securely to depend upon him for the future. *The Lord that delivered me*, saith David, *out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine*. Where, you see, he grounds his dependence for one deliverance upon his grateful

remembrance of another: and indeed there is no man in the world can have that ample experience of the goodness of God, as he who makes constant returns of praise and thanksgiving for it; such a man, merely to improve his gratitude, will make it his business curiously to animadvert upon every instance of the divine goodness, and to descant upon every hint, intimation, and circumstance of it, and treasure up every passage in everlasting remembrance. And seeing experience is nothing but the observation of things treasured up in the memory, he who best remembers the manifold expressions of God's goodness to him, and makes the strictest observations upon them, must have attained to the fullest and most intimate experience of it; and when all is done, there is nothing will create in us that sure confidence in God, and firm dependence upon him, as our own experience of his faithfulness and goodness. If I have a friend, whom in numerous instances I have always found faithful, and constant, and kind, I reckon I may rely upon him with almost the same security as I can rely upon myself: and when in innumerable instances I have always found God my friend, my generous, and kind, and faithful friend, and I have all these instances of it fresh in my memory and under my observation, this must needs create in me a very secure affiance in him, and carry up my faith and hope into an high plerophory. Thus gratitude to God begets in us an ample experience of his goodness; and that experience begets in us a firm dependence upon him: so that if it be eternally reasonable that we should securely rely upon God, by whose power and goodness we are supported in being every moment of our existence,

it is upon this account also eternally reasonable that we should offer up our thanksgivings to him.

To conclude all therefore: seeing our obligations to this duty are so great and many, let us be persuaded to comply with them in our practice. Certainly, never were any people more importunately invited hereunto than we are at this time. It is not long since we were threatened with a foreign invasion, and had too much cause to apprehend the landing of a formidable enemy on our shores; an enemy that with a thousand barbarities hath proclaimed himself an implacable prosecutor of our religion, and that wheresoever he goes carries ruin and destruction along with him. But behold, all of a sudden the melancholy scene is changed, and our dark prospect is cleared up with a glorious vision: for by a wonderful interposure of the divine providence, we are not only delivered from the hands of our enemies, but our enemies are delivered into ours: their naval force, in which they so much gloried, and upon which their whole success depended, being, by the miraculous blessing of God upon the good conduct and bravery of ours, scattered and broken in a few hours; and we not only preserved, but crowned with one of the most glorious victories that ever the sea beheld; which, considering our circumstances, who have no other trench but the ocean, no other wall but our navy round about us, is certainly one of the most remarkable instances of God's watchful providence over us for good that even our own hearts could have wished for: for how much the good providence of God hath concerned itself in this whole affair is so remarkably evident, that we cannot but discern it, unless we wilfully shut our eyes.

For what a strange concurrence was there of events that are only in the disposal of God? *The stars in their courses fought against Sisera*; the winds and storms for several weeks were armed against one part of their navy, by which some were lost, others disabled, and all detained from joining with the other part of it, which by contrary winds was also detained from engaging us, till such time as our whole force was united; and then God gave a gale that blew them on to their own destruction.

To all which is to be added another most considerable instance of God's good providence towards us; viz. that a wary enemy, who always acts with the greatest caution and most sagacious foresight and who never yet fought without some considerable advantage, should be so stupendously infatuated, as to give us close battle with a strength so much inferior to ours. These are all *the Lord's doings*, and they ought to be *marvellous in our eyes*; to excite our gratitude, and unite our hearts and lips in songs of praise and thanksgiving to him, that hereby we may engage our merciful God still to *rejoice over us to do us good*, and continue to bless their majesties' arms with glory and success.

And in pursuance of this excellent duty, let us all be persuaded frequently to retire from our worldly occasions, in our own thoughts, and there to recollect the manifold favours of God to us; to spread them before our eyes in their full breadth, and length, and depth; to turn them up and down upon our thoughts, and survey them in all their parts and proportions, till, by a thorough view and consideration of their endearing features and lineaments, our hearts grow warm with a grateful sense of them;

and then to pour out our souls to God in praises and thanksgivings: by the constant practice of which, we shall by degrees acquire a thankful frame and disposition of soul. And as we grow on, and improve in this heavenly virtue, we shall feel so much life, and spirit, and sweetness in it, that we shall need no other motive than that to oblige us to the practice of it; and our own experience will convince us of a truth, which now perhaps seems a wild paradox to us, viz. that to be sensible of God's benefits, and to meditate on his goodness, to admire his excellencies, and to celebrate his praises, is heaven itself, the life of angels, the quintessence of all joy, and, in a word, the supreme felicity of reasonable beings. Wherefore to assist your endeavours, and carry on your minds to this great and blessed work, I shall briefly propose to your meditations a few grateful considerations concerning the divine benefits, and so conclude.

First, Consider the vast extent of God's benefits, as to the number of them.

Secondly, Their stupendous greatness, as to the degree and value of them.

Thirdly, The generous freeness of them on God's part.

Fourthly, The great immerit and undeservedness of them on ours.

Fifthly, The condescending manner of his bestowing them upon us.

First, Consider the vast extent of God's benefits towards us, as to the number of them; which is so vastly great, that we can no more count them than we can the motes in the air or the sands on the seashore: all that we can do is to reduce them under

such kinds and orders as the astronomers do the stars under such constellations: but to count them singly, one by one, is a task exceeds all arithmetic. In general, for every thing we are, for every thing we have, or ever had, or shall have, we are indebted to his bounty: that we are men, and not worms; that we are not stones, or clods of earth, utterly insensible of all good, and incapable of all felicity; that we are inspired with immortal minds endowed with vast capacities of happiness; that we have so many sensible organs capable of relishing such a vast variety of pleasures; and that we have so many suitable pleasures round about us to treat and entertain them; that we have life and motion, health and vigour, sense and perception, reason and understanding, to guide and govern them, is wholly to be ascribed to his goodness, which penetrates to the very root and centre of our beings. We move upon his earth, and do breathe his air; we drink of his springs, and are fed from his granaries, and clothed from his wardrobe; and, in a word, every good thing we possess, that is either necessary for our subsistence, or convenient for our use, or pleasant for our enjoyment, we derive from his inexhaustible bounty, which daily encompasses us round about, like many fortunate islands, with an ocean of blessings, the single drops whereof (though we are every moment of our lives sensibly refreshed with one or other of them) we can no more recount, than the endless moments of eternity. But if to these numberless benefits of God, which we every day taste, and do sensibly relish and enjoy, we add that numberless more, of which we are not sensible, because they run underground in invisible channels, so that we

neither see nor taste them, though they do us a world of good, we know not how, and insensibly preserve us from a world of evils; we may well cry out with the prophet David, Psalm cxxxix. 17, 18. *How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!* i. e. thy kind and merciful thoughts; *how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: though when I awake, I am still with thee,* i. e. recounting thy favours from morning till night, but after all, can see no end of them.

Secondly, Consider the stupendous greatness of the benefits of God, as to the degree and value of them. There are indeed various degrees of worth in the benefits of God; but the cheapest of them are those which the divine goodness hath prepared to serve our present necessities, conveniencies, and pleasures; and yet a great part of these are of such an intrinsic worth, that if the plenty and commonness of them did not depress their value, we should esteem them inestimable treasures. How comfortable is the appearance of day, after the long nights under the northern pole! What precious things are a cup of fair water or a morsel of brown bread, to such as are pinched with hunger or parched with drought! And did we but value the smallest benefits of God while we enjoy them, but according to the prices we ourselves set upon them when we want them, it is to be feared we should esteem them higher than we do now the greatest. But as for those benefits of God which concern our better part and eternal interest, they are such as only an infinite goodness can bestow. For what goodness less than infinite could have prepared for us a heaven of immortal joys, joys

which the holy angels, yea, which God himself lives upon? What lesser goodness could send down the Son of God to us from the bosom of his Father, to assume our nature, and therein to make expiation for our sins; to consecrate for us a new and living way through the veil of his own flesh into the heavenly sanctuary; and by the light of his doctrine and the footsteps of his example to guide and direct us thither? What less than the same goodness could send down the Holy Spirit to us, to instruct and teach us, to persuade and admonish us, and thereby to cultivate our rank and degenerous natures, in which there is such strong aversion to all the heavenly enjoyments, and to render us fit for the glorious inheritance of the saints in light? In a word, what less than an infinite goodness could thus industriously employ the whole sacred Trinity in contriving, preparing, and accomplishing our everlasting happiness, by such amazing, such refined, and such expressive methods of mercy? For verily, when I set myself to consider the mighty things which God hath done to make us happy, I seem to be looking down from some stupendous precipice, whose height fills me with a sacred horror, that turns my head, confounds my understanding, and almost oversets my reason; so that I am forced to cry out sometimes with the Psalmist, *Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him* with such astonishing favour? and sometimes with St. Paul, with a little more variation; *O the depth of the riches of the goodness and bounty of God! how unsearchable are his designs of mercy, and his ways of beneficence past finding out!*

Thirdly, Consider the generous freedom of the di-

vine benefits on God's part. Even the noblest benefactors among men have great intermixtures of selfishness with their beneficence: for either they gratify their own vanity with it, and affectation of popular applause, or they rid themselves of the troublesome importunity, or ease their yearning bowels of their own compassion, or hope to secure themselves a firm and lasting interest in those they do good to: and even those who act from the nobler principles of religion, and do good in submission to God, and in conformity to his nature, are not so utterly divested of these selfish regards, but that they many times intermingle them even with their purest intentions; and even whilst they act upon those religious principles, it is all along in prospect of their own everlasting happiness. Thus we poor creatures, even in our most pious and generous beneficences, are, by the sense of our own want and indigency, continually biassed towards our own want and interest, either temporal or eternal, or both. But in God, who wants nothing, but is self-sufficient and infinitely happy in his own infinite perfections, matters are far otherwise; he seeks nothing without himself, because he wants nothing, and so can have no self-end in any action *ad extra*. From all the benefits that he heaps upon us, he can reap no other advantage but only the satisfaction of doing good, and the gratification of the infinite generosity of his nature. So that his own action is his end, and he doth good merely for doing good's sake. He is neither compelled to it by necessity, nor obliged to it by any other law but that of his own nature. He is neither wearied nor worried into it, either by our importunity, or by any painful sense he hath of our misery. He is neither flattered

by our promises, nor endeared by our deserts, nor bribed by any prospect he hath of future advantage to himself; but being absolute master of his own actions, and sole counsellor and lawgiver to himself, being the most perfectly independent and all-sufficient source of his own happiness, beyond which he cannot so much as desire, or expect, or hope, being infallibly secure, that nothing which either we or any other creature can do, either for or against him, can either add to or subtract from his essential glory and beatitude: being all this, I say, and a thousand times more than all this, from an uninterested bounty and pure good-will and generosity of nature, he delights to do us good, heaps benefit after benefit upon us, for no other end but to benefit us; and in plentiful showers is continually pouring down his graces and favours upon us, purely that he may profit and please us, and, if possible, content and satisfy us, and render us happy both here and hereafter. This is all the return he expects for his benefits; and if he can but do us good by them, he hath his end, and is gratified to the utmost of his expectations. O the boundless freedom of the goodness of God towards us, that, without any other aim but to do us good, lets forth itself into such plentiful effusions! How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O Lord! how endearing are thy favours! Who can rehearse thy noble acts! Who can shew forth all thy praise, who with such an unparalleled frankness and generosity of soul art continually multiplying thy benefits upon us!

Fourthly, Consider the great immerit and undeservedness of God's benefits on our parts. Considering the number and greatness of God's mercies and favours to us, a stranger to mankind would be prone

to imagine that by our extraordinary services we had laid some vast obligation upon God, for which he esteemed himself so deeply indebted to us, that nothing within the compass of an infinite goodness could be too great a repayment. But, God knows, the case is far otherwise: for instead of obliging him to be kind to us, we have so ungratefully requited his kindness, and our carriage towards him hath been so froward and perverse, under the most endearing expressions of his goodness, that were he not as infinite in patience as he is in justice and power, we had long since provoked him to extirpate the whole race of us from the face of the earth, and to consign us our portion with our fellow-rebels, the devils, in everlasting horror and despair. For instead of acknowledging his manifold favours by our dutiful behaviour, which is the most acceptable return we can make of them, as if it had been as much our care to affront and provoke him, as it is his to oblige us by perpetual beneficence; we treat our own base lusts, which are the only things he hateth, with his mercies and favours; we give his bread to our gluttony, his drink to our intemperance, his clothes to our pride and vanity: he lends us breath, and we blaspheme him with it; he inspires us with wit and understanding, and we expose and ridicule him with it; he gives us health and strength, and we employ it against him in wantonness and luxury: and thus we basely sacrifice his favours to the Devil. And though we do not all of us thus openly outrage him with his own benefits, yet how few are there that employ them to those good ends and purposes for which he designs and bestows them! how little good do we with them to others, and how little the bet-

ter are we for them ourselves! How cold and indifferent are we upon the receipt of them, how slothful in the improvement of them, how selfish in the use and enjoyment of them, and what lame and wretched returns do we commonly make of them! And yet, for all this, O wonder of goodness! God is not at all a-weary of doing good to us; but doth not only still continue to us his common and standing benefits, such as the light and heat of the sun, the fruits of the earth, and the comforts of the elements, together with a strong, and healthful, and vigorous capacity of enjoying them; but also those peculiar favours which respect our everlasting well-being, viz. the instructions of his word, and the refreshments of his sacraments, and the assistances of his Spirit; which, by a thousand invisible arts and methods of kindness which we take no notice of, but rather resist and oppose, doth still drive on the great design of making us everlastingly happy: the consideration whereof, if we have any spark of ingenuity in us, cannot but inflame our souls with gratitude and praise.

Fifthly and lastly, Consider the condescending manner of God's bestowing his benefits upon us. For though it be infinite condescension in him to think of us, who are placed so far beneath his thoughts, who are but worms crawling under his feet, and whom he can crush into nothing at his pleasure; though he *dwells on high*, as the Psalmist truly and emphatically expresses it, infinitely blessed in his own native glories and perfections, and is an all-sufficient prospect and entertainment to himself; yet he not only *humbles himself to behold the things that are done in heaven and earth*, but also humbles himself to behold even us, to provide for us, and to

take as much care of us, as if our concerns were his own: nay, he humbles himself so far, as to treat us as our friend, as if we stood upon the same level with him; and espouses our interest as if it were his own, and as if he could not be happy without our being so: yea, farther yet, he treats us as if we were his superiors; places us upon the throne, as it were, and himself at the footstool, and entreats and supplicates to admit of his love and accept of his favours; he sends ambassadors of peace to us, to sue for our amity, and to *beseech us to be reconciled to him*. O blessed God! what injury didst thou ever do us, that thou shouldest address to us for reconciliation? That we should sue to thee indeed, who have injured and affronted thee beyond the patience of any but a God to endure, is doubtless the most just and reasonable thing in the world: but that thou shouldest sue to us, who never didst any thing but goodness to us, who hast obliged us beyond all our capacities of repaying thee, who hast been kind to us even to wonder and astonishment: and this not only without our desert, but after our highest affronts, and notwithstanding our most disingenuous provocations to the contrary. O blessed God! what amazing condescensions are these! For when, after all his kind attempts to prevail upon our obstinacy gratefully to accept his favours, and, by so doing, to improve them to our own everlasting advantage, he finds we are incurably determined to the contrary, with what passionate regrets, and yearnings, and turning of bowels, doth he discharge us from his paternal care, and abandon us to the dire effects of our own folly! Such wondrous stoops of the divine majesty would tempt one to think, did we not demon-

strably know the contrary, that God hath as much need of us, as we have of his favours; and that it is as much for his good that we should thankfully receive them, as it is for ours that he should generously bestow them. But, after all this, we do most certainly know, if we know any thing of the nature of God, that it can be nothing but pure goodness and generosity of nature that obliges and determines him to these amazing condescensions. Which, if we weigh in the balance of a just consideration, together with the foregoing motives, cannot fail, if we have any spark either of modesty, ingenuity, or even humanity remaining in us, to determine us to follow the excellent advice of the Psalmist in the text; *Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High.*

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, majesty and dominion, from this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES

UPON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

DISCOURSE I.

UPON

1 TIMOTHY IV. 8.

Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THE great design of Christianity being to promote our future happiness, and qualify us for it, things are more or less valuable in its esteem, as they more or less conduce to this great and excellent end. And hence the apostle tells us, that of all the virtues Christianity obliges us to, *charity is the greatest*, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. that is, a sincere love of God, and an universal good-will to men. And the greatest it is upon this account, because of all virtues it is most congenial to the heavenly state; that being a state of endless love and pure friendship: and all other virtues are valued more or less proportionably, as they partake of this virtue of charity. To give worth to our faith, it is necessary it should *work by love*, Gal. v. 6. To make our knowledge acceptable, it is necessary it should run into *love*, 1 Cor. viii. 2, 3. Yea, without charity, the gift of miracles, almsgiving, and martyrdom itself, are things of no value in the accounts of Christianity, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3. Nay, so much is this great virtue designed by the Christian religion, that the apostle tells us, that *the end of the commandment is charity*, 1 Tim. i. 5. that is, all the duties which the commandment enjoins are designed only as means to advance and perfect our love to God and men: and all means, you know, are

more or less excellent, proportionably as they conduce to the ends they are designed for. Wherefore since our future happiness is the ultimate end of Christianity, and universal love our most necessary qualification for it, it necessarily follows, that the goodness of all religious means consists in their aptitude to abstract and purify our affections; to exalt and sublimate our love; and to propagate in us that godlike and heavenly temper, which is so necessary to qualify us for the enjoyment of God and heaven. But, alas! how ordinary is it for men to mistake their means for their ends; and to value themselves upon doing those things, which, if they be not directed to a farther end, are altogether insignificant; accounting those things to be absolutely good, which are but relatively so; and which, unless they conduce to that which is good, are perfectly indifferent. Of which we have too many sad instances among ourselves. For how many are there, who, though they have nothing else to prize themselves for, but only of their keeping of fasts, and looking sourly on a Sunday, their hearing so many sermons, and numbering so many prayers, are yet bloated with as high conceits of their own sanctity and godliness, as if they had commenced saints, and were arrived to the highest degrees of perfection? And though pride and malice, covetousness and ambition, are the only graces they are eminent in; yet you shall see these empty wretched things preached upon the pinnacle of self-conceit, and from thence looking down upon poor moral mortals, as if they were things of an inferior species, not worthy to be reckoned in the same class of beings with themselves. Such flaunting hypocrites, it seems, there have always been; and in these latter

times it is foretold they should abound: for the apostle tells us, 1 Tim. iv. 1. that *the Spirit speaketh expressly*, that in the latter ages there should arise a sort of people, who, *departing from the faith, should give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; who should forbid marriage, and command abstinence from meats*, ver. 3. that is, as I suppose, should place all their religion in outward and bodily severities, which at best are only means and instruments of religion; and that in these they should pride themselves, as if they were the only saints of the age: whereas, in truth, they would prove the rankest hypocrites that ever appeared in a religious vizard. And of these he exhorts Timothy carefully to forewarn his flock, and for his own part to reject their profane and ridiculous fables; and rather to exercise himself in true substantial godliness, than in such outward bodily rigours and severities: for which he subjoins this general reason; *for bodily exercise profiteth little;* that is, mere outward bodily exercise in religion, abstracted from inward piety and godliness, is of very little avail in a religious account: for the bodily exercise here spoken of, it seems, was such as had some little profit attending it, and consequently was such as had some general tendency to good, and was improvable to some advantage, had it been wisely managed and directed. For πρὸς ὀλίγον, here translated *little*, is not so to be understood, as if it signified *nothing;* because it is here opposed to something that is greater, viz. to πρὸς πάντα: *Bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable for all things;* and therefore this bodily exercise must profit something, though less than godliness, which is profitable for all things: as

when Plato says, Σωκράτου ἐπ' ὀλίγον φροντέον, ἀληθείας ἐπιπολὺ, "Socrates must be a little attended, but truth "a great deal more." And if it be such an exercise as doth profit a little, then it must be such as is religious, and is of some small account in religion. In the prosecution of this subject therefore I shall do these two things:

I. Shew you what this outward or bodily exercise in religion is.

II. In what cases it is that it profits little.

I. Wherein doth this bodily exercise consist? I answer, It consists in these six things:

1. In an outward visible profession of religion.
2. In bodily severities upon religious accounts.
3. In bodily passions in religion.
4. In bodily worship.
5. In bodily fluency and volubility in religious exercises.
6. In a mere outward form or round of religious duties.

1. It consists in an outward visible profession of religion. That we should make a visible profession of the true religion, when it is sufficiently proposed to us, is an unquestionable duty: and that for this reason; because not to profess visibly what we believe to be the true religion, is an open disowning of God, who is the immediate object of all true religion. For he that believes that this is the will of God, and yet is either ashamed or afraid openly to avow and acknowledge it, declares that he is either ashamed of God, or that he fears man more than God; both which are highly impious. Besides, by our visible owning of religion, we propose it to others, who by our example may be persuaded to embrace it as well

as we: and it is our duty, not only to entertain the true religion ourselves, but, so far as in us lies, to propagate it to others; that so diffusing our light round about us, others may be directed to heaven by it, as well as ourselves. This therefore is of some account with God, that we visibly profess the true religion; but if this be all we do, it will profit us but very little. For if we do not own our religion in our actions, while we profess it in our words, we contradict ourselves; our practice gives the lie to our creed, and our wicked lives baffle our holy profession. For while a man acts contrary to the rules of his religion, he doth as effectually disown it, as if he should openly renounce his baptism, and make a public recantation of Christianity. For as our profession of religion is performed by a visible signification of our belief of it, and as this may be signified by our actions as well as our words; so in effect we do renounce religion, when we give any visible signification that we do not believe it; and this we do, as well when we act like infidels, as when by words we declare our infidelity. For by our deeds we may signify our minds, as well as by our words; and he that acts as if he did not believe, doth give a more convincing argument to his infidelity than all his words or professions can be to the contrary; because it is rationally supposable, that a man will rather pretend to believe what he doth not, than that he will act contrary to his own belief and judgment; it being a greater degree of violence to ourselves, to act contrary to what we do believe, than to pretend to believe what we do not. So that it is not all our talk and verbal owning of religion that will serve the end of a visible profession; which is, so to own

God as to induce others to own him as well as ourselves; because he that denies God in his actions will never be able to induce others to believe that he doth sincerely own him in his words and professions. Wherefore, unless we will live up to the rules of our religion, we were as good not to make any visible profession of it: for our profession will serve no good ends of religion. It may indeed disgrace it in the opinion of those who measure its goodness by the lives of its votaries: for either they will think that our religion teaches us to live as we do, and that will make them abhor it; or else they will imagine that, notwithstanding our profession, we do not believe it, and that will make them suspect it to be a cheat and imposture. So that for any good Christianity is like to reap from wicked Christians professing it, it were highly desirable that they would renounce their baptism, and openly declare themselves atheists and infidels; because by their actions they blaspheme the religion they profess, and by assuming to themselves the holy name of Christians they do but more openly profane it.

2. Another sort of bodily exercise, that is of some, though but little account in religion, is our voluntary undergoing of bodily rigours or severities upon the score of religion. There is doubtless a very wise use to be made of bodily severities in religion, provided they be but used with that prudence and caution as they ought to be: for they are excellent remedies against many of our inordinate fleshly inclinations, to tame our extravagant appetites, and to render them more tractable to the commands of reason and religion; besides that in the general they are of singular use to wean our souls from the pleasures

of the body, which do often corrupt the palate of the mind, and render it incapable of relishing divine enjoyments. For if we indulge to our appetites all those lawful pleasures which they crave, our souls will be apt to contract too great a familiarity with the flesh, and to be so taken up by the delights and satisfactions of it, as to neglect those diviner pleasures for which they were created, and which are more natural and congenial to them: and considering that in our future state we must live without these bodies, and take leave of all the pleasures of them, it is very requisite that we should now beforehand wean and abstract ourselves from the enjoyments of corporeal sense; that so when we come to part with them, we may know how to be happy without them, and be fit to live the lives of naked spirits. And therefore we find, that there has scarce been any religion whatsoever, pretending to qualify men for another life, but hath imposed fasting and abstinence, and other bodily severities, as proper means to lustrate and purify the mind, and to prepare it for immediate converses with God and separated spirits; but then the consequence was, that the over strict imposition of these instrumentals of religion occasioned a world of superstition: for being so strictly imposed, they obtained so far in the opinion of the world as to be reckoned among the essentials of religion, and counted absolutely good, and in their own nature pleasing and grateful unto God; which possibly by degrees introduced those φρικτὰ μυστήρια, horrid and bloody mysteries, into the heathen religion. For mankind being once possessed with such an opinion of God, as to think he was pleased and delighted to see his poor creatures afflict and punish themselves, it was easy

from thence to infer, that he would be much more pleased to see them butcher themselves, and sprinkle his altars with their own blood. And as this overweening opinion did probably introduce human sacrifices into the heathen religion, so it is certain that it hath introduced sundry false doctrines into the Romish; as particularly, that fasting, and whipping ourselves, and going on pilgrimages, are meritorious things; that by them we expiate our sins, and make satisfaction to the justice of God; as if the guilt that binds us over to eternal perdition were to be expiated by a sound whipping, or a short pilgrimage were a proportionable commutation for the eternal penance of hell-fire. But these are the vain imaginations of men, who would feign impose laws upon God, and prescribe to him the measures of punishment; who would do as wickedly as they please, and suffer what they please for so doing. But let us not deceive ourselves; if we will choose to sin, it is reasonable that that God whom we offend by our sin should choose and appoint our punishment. It is by no means fit that criminals should be their own judges: for if they were, they would have very little reason to be afraid of sinning; because they would be obliged to suffer no more for it than what they pleased themselves! But the right of punishing is in the offended party; and therefore, if we will offend God by violating his laws, we have no right to choose our own penance; but must, whether we will or no, submit to what he thinks fit to inflict upon us; and what that is, he hath told us beforehand, even everlasting expulsion from his presence into the society and portion of devils and damned spirits. So that for us to expect to atone and satisfy God, by little

voluntary penances of our own, is just as reasonable, as if a murderer should cut off his little finger, and thereupon expect to be excused from the penalty of the law.

And as these bodily severities are no expiations of our sins, so neither are they in their own nature pleasing and grateful unto God: for he is a good God, and an universal lover of all his creation; and consequently can be no farther pleased with the sufferings and afflictions of any of his creatures, than as they are necessary either to do them good, or to make them exemplary to others, or to vindicate the honour of his own violated laws: neither of which ends are served by voluntary penances and severities, as such, if they be not subordinated to the ends of virtue and religion. For what can fasting signify, if it be not designed to famish our lusts? Can our hungry bowels be a delightful spectacle to that God who feeds the young ravens, and takes so much care to provide for all his creation? What virtue is there in the chastening of our bodies, if it be not intended to humble and mortify our souls? Do we think that that God who is so zealous of our welfare can be recreated with our miseries, or take pleasure in our tragical looks and bloody shoulders? It is true, so far as these things are instruments of good to us, they are pleasing unto God, even as all other instruments of religion; but it is not the suffering of our bodies he is pleased with, but the good which it doth our souls: but if they do our souls no good, if they do not purify our affections, and wean us from fleshly desires, and make us more fit for the heavenly state, they are as insignificant in the account of God,

as the paring of our nails or the clipping of our hair.

3. Another sort of these bodily exercises that are of some, though but little account in religion, is bodily passions in religion. There is, I confess, an excellent use to be made of our bodily passions in the exercise of our religion, provided we do not place our religion in them: for if we do, they will betray us into the grossest cheats and impostures. For in the general, we find that our passions do wing our intellectual faculties, and render them more intense and expedite in their operations. For whilst the soul and body are united to one another, there is a mutual reflowing and communication of passions between them; insomuch that whensoever the soul is any ways affected with any object, there immediately follows a suitable perturbation or passion in the body; and then this passion of the body, as it is grateful or ingrateful to it, doth more vigorously affect the soul with love or aversation; and then the soul being thus re-affected and incited by the bodily passion, will more vehemently pursue or shun the object which caused its first motion or affection. When therefore our souls and bodies do thus sympathise with each other in the exercises of religion, we must necessarily perform them with greater vigour and intention.

But to make this more plain to you, I will briefly instance in those four great passions of religion, viz. love, and hatred, and sorrow, and joy. As for that of love; when the soul is affected with God, or virtue, or any other amiable objects of religion, immediately there follows a sweet and grateful passion in

the body. For the heart being dilated towards the beloved object, puts the blood and spirits into a free and placid motion, which diffuses a certain agreeable heat into the breast, and invigorates the brain with a flood of active spirits; and then the soul being sensible of this grateful emotion in the body, is thereby more vigorously incited to pursue those amiable objects wherewith she was first affected. And so for hatred: when the soul is practically convinced by the arguments of religion of the odiousness of any evil it forbids, the enmity and hatred she hath towards it causes an anxious contraction of the heart and compression of the animal spirits; which produces a chilness in the breast, a retarding of the blood, and an unequal motion of the pulse; and then the soul sympathising with the body cannot but be sensible of this ungrateful passion it is put into; which must needs add to her hatred of those odious objects which were the cause of it, and cause her more vehemently to shun and avoid them. So again, when the soul is moved to sorrow and repentance for any past sins and miscarriages, the sad regrets she suffers within herself produce a very doleful passion in the body; such as pinches the heart, congeals the blood, and causes an ungrateful languor of the spirits; and then by compassionating her grieved consort, she is thereby excited to a higher degree of displeasure against those sins that caused its grief and disturbance. Lastly, when the soul is joyed and delighted with any religious object or exercise; by that sweet complacency she enjoys within herself, there is produced a most pleasant emotion in the body, the animal spirits flowing to the heart in an equal and placid stream; where being arrived through its dilated ori-

fices, they soothe and tickle it into a most sensible pleasure; and then the soul being affected by the body's pleasure doth from thence derive an additional joy, which doth more vigorously encourage her to pursue those objects and continue those exercises from whence her original joy proceeded.

So that you see, that by reason of that perpetual intercourse there is between our souls and our bodies, there is an excellent use even of our sensitive passions in religion. And it cannot be denied, but that a gentle temper of body, whose passions are soft, and easy, and ductile, and apt to be commoved with the soul, may be of great advantage to our religious exercises; because whensoever it is religiously affected, its passions will be apt to intend and quicken the affections of the soul, and to render them more vigorous and active: but farther than this they are of no account at all in religion. For as there are many men who are sincerely good, that yet cannot raise their sensitive passions in their religious exercises; that are heartily sorry for their sins, and yet cannot weep for them; that do entirely love God, and delight in his service, and yet cannot put their blood and spirits into the enravishing emotions of sensitive love and joy: so on the other hand, there are many gross hypocrites, that have not one dram of true piety in them, who yet in their religious exercises can put themselves into wondrous transports of bodily passion, that can pour out their confession in floods of tears, and cause their hearts to dilate into raptures of sensitive love, and their spirits to tickle them into ecstacies of joy; which is purely to be resolved into the different tempers of men's bodies; some tempers being naturally so calm and sedate, as that they are

scarce capable of being disturbed into a passion; others again so soft, and tender, and impressible, that the most frivolous fancy is able to raise a commotion in them. And hence we see, that some people can weep most heartily at the misfortunes of lovers in plays and romances, and as much rejoice at their good successes, though they know that both are fictions, and mere ideas of fancy: whereas others can scarce shed a tear or raise a sensitive joy at the real calamities or prosperities of a friend, whom yet they love a great deal more than these men can possibly do their feigned and romantic heros. And yet, alas! how very often do men place the whole of their religion in these mechanical motions of their blood and spirits; that think they are exceeding good, if they can but chafe themselves into a devout passion; and that it is an infallible sign of godliness that their blood and spirits are easily moved by religious ideas, and apt to be elevated or dejected according as sad or joyous arguments are pathetically represented to their fancies. And though they do not understand the argument, or, which is all one to them, though that which is delivered for argument is mere gibberish and insignificant canting, that hath nothing of argument or reality in it, only some empty fiction is conveyed to their fancies by a musical voice in fanciful expressions; yet because they are affected by it, and it raises a sensible perturbation in their blood and spirits, they presently conclude it to be an income of God, and an infallible token of his special love and favour to them: as if it were a sign of godliness and a mark of God's favourites, to be affected with nonsense, feathered with soft and delicate phrases, and pointed with pathetic accents.

Thus there are some men who believe themselves to be converted merely because they have run through all the stages of passion, in that new road of artificial conversion which some modern authors have found out: for according as the work of conversion hath been described by some modern authors, it is wholly placed in so many different scenes of passion. For first, a man must pass under the discipline of the law and the spirit of bondage; that is, he must be frightened into a sense of his lost and undone condition; and in this sense he must grieve bitterly for his sins as the causes of his ruin and perdition: and this is that which they call conviction and compunction. From hence he must proceed into the evangelical state, and pass into the spirit of adoption, the entrance of which is contrition, or humiliation; which consists in an ingenuous sorrow for sin, proceeding from a passionate sense of love and goodness: and then, having acted over all these mournful passions, he embraces and lays hold upon Christ, which is the concluding scene, and is altogether made up of joy and exultation: and so the work of conversion is finished. Now though I do not at all deny but to the conversion of an habitual sinner it is indispensably necessary that he should be convinced of his danger, and deeply affected with sorrow and remorse for his folly and wickedness, (and therefore would not be so understood, as if I intended to discountenance these holy passions, which are such necessary introductions to a sincere conversion;) yet neither do I doubt, but by the help of a melancholy fancy, attended with soft and easy passions, a man may perform all these parts of conversion, and yet be never the better for it: for many

times these passions are only the necessary effects of a diseased fancy, and are altogether as mechanical as the beating of our pulse or the circulation of our blood. And hence we see that this kind of conversion, which wholly consists of bodily passions, doth commonly both begin and end with some languishing distemper of the body, in which the fancy is overclouded, and the motion of the blood and spirits retarded by the prevalence of black and melancholy humours; which being once evacuated, the man's body returns again to its former temper, and upon this he becomes the same man again that he was before his pretended conversion. And accordingly, it is observed by those very persons who place the whole work of conversion in these mechanical passions, that generally, after the pangs of regeneration are over, their converts grow cold, and careless, and remiss in religion; and so like to what they were in the state of nature, that you would hardly believe they had ever been converted: which is a plain evidence that this sort of conversion doth not reach the soul; that it doth not alter our practical judgment of things, nor rationally determine our wills to new choices and resolutions; and consequently that it is nothing but a mere train of sensitive passions mechanically excited by the fancy. And hence you may observe in the modern stories of our religious melancholians, that they commonly pass out of one passion into another, without any manner of reasoning and discourse: now they are in the depths of grief and despair, by and by upon the pinnacle of joy and assurance; and yet they are the same men, neither better nor worse, when they do despair as when they are assured; and consequently have no

more reason to be assured now, than they had when they were encompassed with all the horrors of desperation. For the only reason any man hath to be assured of God's love is his likeness and conformity to him, which is that alone which endears us unto God, and entitles us to the promise of his favour. And yet, though these men do not pretend to be better, or more godlike, now they are assured, than they were when they despaired, yet their hearts are overwhelmed with floods of sensitive joy, and they are strangely comforted, they know not how or wherefore. And though while they were in despair they thought of those promises and motives of comfort that now ravish and transport them, and had every whit as much reason to lay claim to them too; yet then they lay like cakes of ice at their hearts, without affording them the least gleam of warmth and comfort: which is a plain evidence that both their joys and sorrows are the products of bodily temper, and not of reason and judgment; because they pass out of one into the other without any intervenient discourse, and are agitated into contrary passions whilst they are under the same rational motives; are dejected this moment, and comforted the next; which argues that their reason hath no hand in their passions: for if it had, they could never be so contrarily affected. Nor can it be supposed that such irrational passions are raised in them by the divine Spirit, because he ordinarily works upon men in an human and rational way, beginning with their understandings, and so persuading their wills and exciting their passions by rational motives and arguments: those passions therefore that are not so excited can be resolved into no other principle but

that of bodily temper. And accordingly you may observe, that all this train of passions, wherein too many men do place the whole of their conversion, are necessarily connected and chained to one another: so that if you move but the first link, all the rest will naturally follow; which is a plain argument that they may be excited, not only in a free and rational, but also in a necessary or mechanical way. As for instance, suppose these men before their pretended conversion to have a good dose of melancholy in their tempers, this will naturally dispose them to terrible and mournful conceits: and being thus disposed, their tender fancies are easily impressed with dreadful images of the wrath of God and their own undone condition; and according as the temper of their bodies is more or less disposed to fear, so this frightful passion continues longer or shorter upon them. If it continues longer, it will, by the reiterated impressions of those dreadful objects that first raised it, by degrees be heightened into horror and desperation; and when it is so, then the man is under conviction of his undone condition, and under the terrors of the law and the spirit of bondage, which according to the new method is always the first step to conversion. And when the first fury of despair is over, it naturally issues into a deep melancholy, and there spends itself in woful regrets and self-condemning reflections: and this is that which they call attrition, or compunction, which is the next step to be taken in this methodical way of conversion.

And hence many people do continue many years together in this languishing state; in all which time they believe themselves to be under the lash of the

law, and the discipline of the spirit of bondage; when, God knows, many times there is nothing in it but a mere melancholy humour, tinctured and heightened with dismal notions of religion. But then, when the melancholy begins to disperse, and to make way for the spirits to flow into the brain in a more brisk and active torrent, and so to warm and refresh the drooping fancy, they will by degrees scatter those horrid images and dismal fancies of religion that rid the imagination and raised those tragical passions; and so the man will gradually emerge out of the spirit of bondage into a more comfortable and evangelical condition. For now his fancy being something more lightsome, but still retaining some relicks of its former darkness, will be disposed for grateful as well as dismal phantasms, and to be impressed by lovely and joyous, as well as terrible and mournful objects. So that if now God, or Christ, or any other object of religion, be but represented to the man in such a dress of metaphors and glistering allusions as is apt to affect his carnalized fancy, he will presently form such charming conceits and pleasant imaginations of them as will necessarily put his blood and spirits into a most amorous emotion towards them: so that now he shall seem inflamed with the love of Christ, and fancy him twined in his arms and embraces; whereas in reality, the thing he is so infinitely fond of is nothing but an idol of his own fancy, a mere baby-christ, dressed up by his own imagination in all the charms of sensual beauty, and furnished with smiles, and kisses, and caresses, and all the pretty endearments of a doting lover. And now the man's fancy being thus partly hung with fine pictures of Christ, those re-

licks of melancholy vapours that are yet remaining in it will very much dispose it to sad and mournful conceits, especially when this idol of Christ, which he so much dotes upon, shall be represented as weeping over his sins, and grieved at the unkindnesses he shews him. And now his fancy being thus furnished with such a mixture of amorous and mournful imaginations, must necessarily beget in him a mixture of love and grief, and cause him to mourn for his sins; because they make his Saviour grieve, whom he seems to love so dearly. And this is humiliation, which is the third stage in this imaginary road of conversion. And now the man having set up so gay an image of Christ in his fancy, felt within himself such sensible pangs of love towards him, and grief for the affronts and unkindnesses he hath offered him, his amorous imagination will presently suggest to him, that doubtless so sweet a Saviour cannot but be conquered with all these passionate endearments, and smitten with a reciprocal love upon so many feeling expressions of his kindness towards him: and being possessed with this imagination, he will presently fancy his dear image of Christ into all the postures of a transported lover, smiling upon him, and spreading out his arms to embrace him; upon which there will follow such a sweet effusion of his spirits towards his enamoured Saviour, that he will fancy himself to be leaping into his arms, and rolling in his bosom, and resting, and leaning, and relying upon him. And now his fancy having carried him to his journey's end, and lodged him in the embraces of his Saviour, O the joy and ravishment! he feels his heart pant through excess of delight, and ready to break with its own raptures.

And thus you see how this whole method of conversion may be easily transacted by an active and melancholy fancy.

And as it may be, so I doubt not but many times it is; for how many men are there who strongly imagine themselves to have been converted, that yet are never the better for it, being still as averse unto God and true goodness as ever they were before? Nay, and many times are so far from being bettered by their conversion, that they are a great deal the worse for it; for instead of forsaking all sin, which is that wherein true conversion doth consist, they only shift their vices, and many times in laying one devil they conjure up seven worse in the room of it. Perhaps before they fancied themselves to have been converted, they were openly lewd and profane; they would swear, and be drunk, and wallow in sensuality and voluptuousness: but, notwithstanding these beastly and damnable crimes, they had some very amiable qualities in them: they were courteous, and affable, and kind, and obliging; faithful in their professions, and just and honest in their dealings: but now, alas! by passing through these dismal stages of pretended conversion, they have contracted such a mass of melancholy humours as hath quite soured their sweet and lovely tempers into pride and envy, peevishness and faction, insolence and censoriousness, and all the other ingredients of a sullen and unsociable nature. So that though now indeed they will not be openly lewd and profane, as they were before; yet, which is a great deal worse, they will be false and ill natured, and griping and ungovernable; and, which is worst of all, they will be all this while under the disguise of religion, and the

patronage of a deceived conscience: so that whereas their former vices had only the possession of their wills, but not of their consciences, these are seized of both, which renders their condition the more dangerous. For heretofore virtue and religion had a strong party within them; there being a law in their minds that warred against the law in their members: but now all is subdued to the dominion of their sins, and their wills and consciences, like Simeon and Levi, become brethren in iniquity. Whilst therefore men place their religion in such artificial trains of passion, they will be liable to all manner of cheats and impostures. For the generality of men being ignorant of the power of melancholy, and of the frame and structure of their own bodies; if their fancies are but tinctured with religion, they will be apt to attribute every extraordinary emotion they feel to the immediate influence of the Spirit of God, and to account that to be grace and inspiration which is a mere necessary effect of matter and motion: and being once possessed with this conceit, they lie open to all the follies of enthusiasm. For now nothing will satisfy them but heats of fancy and transports of passion: and whilst they should be attending to the sober dictates of scripture and right reason, they will be looking for incomes, and impulses, and secret manifestations; and consequently will be apt to interpret every odd whimsy for an inward whisper from Heaven, and every brisk emotion of their spirits for an immediate smile of God's countenance; than which, I dare boldly say, there is nothing more mischievous to religion, or contrary to the life and power of it. For religion is a wise, a still and silent thing, that con-

sists not in frisks of fancy and whirlwinds of passion; but in a divine temper of mind, and an universal resignation of our wills to God; and this, not only in intermittent fits of passion, but in the midst of cool thoughts and calm deliberations. For true religion is a state of a fixed and constant nature, that doth not come and go, like the colours of a blushing face; but is the natural and true complexion of the soul. How religious soever therefore we may be in our passionate heats and transports, it is altogether insignificant, unless the standing temper of our minds be good, and our religion be settled in our natures. For though it cannot be denied but these our bodily passions do profit something, as they are useful instruments of religion; yet I think it is very apparent, from what hath been said, that he who places his religion in them, doth but deceive his own soul.

4. Another sort of bodily exercise, that is of some, though but little account in religion, is fluency and volubility in religious exercises; or a readiness of wording our thoughts in proper and affecting expressions; either in prayer to God, or in speaking of God and things divine: the proper use of which is this, that in prayer it is apt to excite and kindle our devout and religious affections. For besides that scantiness of words in prayer doth divert the mind, by putting it to the trouble of inventing new expressions to clothe its thoughts and desires, which, because of its inability to attend many things at once, must needs interrupt its zeal and intention, and so make breaks and chasms in its devotions: whereas when a man expresses himself easily and fluently, so that his words keep pace with his desires and affections, he will be able to keep his thoughts more in-

tent, and to fix himself upon God with all the united vigour of his mind, which not being disturbed with the difficulty of expressing its desires, will be the more at leisure to intend them, that so its devotions may flow *secundo flumine*, in a more easy and undisturbed current: besides which, I say, we all find by experience, that proper and fluent expressions are in their own nature apt to warm and heighten our affections; which nothing hath a greater influence in, than the charms of pathetical oratory.

To be able therefore to word our prayers in proper and ready expressions is of considerable advantage to our devotions; our words being so apt to affect our minds, and our passions to keep time with the music of our own language: and whilst we wear these bodies about us, and our souls are clogged and depressed with fleshly desires, we have need enough to use all arts and advantages of spiriting and enlivening our devotions. But yet, I confess, of all these bodily exercises, this is the least considerable in religion; because we may easily supply the defect of natural fluency by excellent forms of prayer; the use of which is doubtless far more expedient than the best of our extempore effusions. For he that uses a form hath nothing else to do in prayer but only to recollect his own thoughts, and fix them upon God; and to keep his mind affected with a due sense of the divine majesty, and his own need of and dependence upon him: whereas he that prays extempore, besides all this, is concerned to invent proper and apt expressions, lest he should be impertinent or indecent in his addresses unto God; unless he expects that the Spirit should immediately dictate to him the words of his prayer; which is to suppose himself a

person immediately inspired, and his prayer of divine revelation; and consequently of equal authority with the scriptures themselves. But the best religious use that can be made of fluency and volubility of speech, is in speaking to others of God and things divine; here it is useful indeed to make man an orator for religion, and to enable him to recommend it more effectually to others.

Thus far therefore this sort of bodily exercise may be profitable; both as it may be made instrumental to raise our own devotions, and to propagate true piety unto others: but beyond this, I know no place at all it hath in religion: for there is no doubt, but we may be very good men without this gift of fluency, and very bad men with it; there being no necessity of consequence from an honest heart to a voluble tongue. And certainly, that which proceeds from no higher principle than mere natural enthusiasm, and consequently may be easily attained by persons grossly hypocritical and debauched, ought not to be looked upon as a mark of godliness. And yet, alas! how many men are there that place all their religion in their tongues; and esteem it as a certain sign of grace, that they are able to pray in fluent expressions, and to talk of God in rapturous flights of fancy! For they being most commonly strained in their religious exercises, and not able to vent themselves with any freedom or readiness, when they fall into an extraordinary fit of fluency and enlargement, of which they can give no natural account, they presently conclude it to be an immediate gift of God's Spirit, and a special token of his peculiar favour to them. And accordingly, if you peruse the late histories of the spiritual experiences of our modern con-

verts, you will find that they contain little else but strange relations of their rapturous discourses and wondrous enlargements in prayer: which because they have something extraordinary in them are generally thought to be the immediate effects of the divine Spirit; whereas commonly they proceed merely from the present temper of the body, and are as mechanical as any other operations of nature. For let a man's body be but put into a fervent temper; his spirits into quick, but manageable motions; this will naturally produce in him a more fine and exquisite power of perception, by causing the images of things to come faster into his fancy, and to appear more distinct there; and then his fancy being more pregnant with new ideas and images than it uses to be, his expressions must necessarily be more fluent and easy. But then, if when this natural fervour of his temper be intended with vapours of heated melancholy, his fancy be but often impressed and rubbed upon with the most vehement and moving objects of religion, such as God and Christ, and heaven and hell; it must necessarily raise in him great and vehement passions, and dictate to him pathetic and rapturous expressions. And this hath been commonly experimented by the devotos of all religions: for even among the devouter Turks and heathens we may find as notorious instances of those incomes and enlargements, as in any of our modern histories of Christian experiences. Thus the heathen poets, in all high flushes of their fancy, conceited themselves divinely inspired; *Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.* And the great orator Aristides positively affirms himself to be inspired in his orations; because sometimes he felt in himself an extraordinary vein of fluency, which

was only excited by a brisker agitation of his spirits. Wherefore it is not at all to be wondered at, if, when men are employed in religious exercises, the same natural enthusiasm, especially when it is exalted by religious melancholy, should so wing and inspire their fancies. For there is no man whatsoever, that is but religiously inclined, and of a soft and impressive temper, but by familiarizing his fancy to the great objects of religion, and setting them before his mind in distinct and affecting ideas, may easily chafe himself into such a pathos, as to be able to talk to, or of God and religion, in lofty and rapturous strains of rhetoric: nor is it any argument of such a man's being inspired, that his discourse doth so move and affect those that hear him; because all language that is soft, fluent, and pathetical, is naturally apt to make deep impressions on the auditors. For even the Grecian sophists, as Plutarch tells us, by their singing tones, and honied words, and effeminate phrases and accents, did very often transport their auditors into a kind of bacchical enthusiasm: and no doubt but the hearers of whom he speaks, who were wont to applaud their orators at the end of their declamations with a θείως, θεοφορήτως, δαιμονίως, ἀπροσίτως, *divinely, heavenly, preciously, unimitably* spoken, found themselves as much moved as many a man doth at a sermon; who yet thinks it is not the art of the preacher, but the Spirit of God speaking in and by him, that warms and excites them. Wherefore, as we would not deceive and undo our own souls, let us have a great care that we do not place our religion in any such enthusiastic fervours of spirit and overflowings of fancy: for though this may be a helpful instrument to us in our religious exercises, yet it

is not by this that we are to estimate the goodness of them; but by those laws and circumstances which do moralize human actions, and render them reasonable, and holy, and good. For it is not in loud noises or melting expressions that the divine Spirit is discovered; but in a divine nature and godlike disposition: and the effects of true religion are not to be looked for in words and talk, but in life and action; and therefore St. Paul tells the Corinthians, some of whom, it seems, had too great an opinion of this way of religious rhetorication, that he would come among them and know, *not the speech of them that were puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God*, saith he, *consisteth not in word, but in power*, 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20.

Fifthly, Another sort of bodily exercise that is of some, though but little account in religion, is outward and bodily worship. There is no doubt but we ought, when we are worshipping God, to signify the profound sense that we have of his majesty and greatness, by outward adorations, and an humble and lowly demeanour. For though we may signify to God the honour and worship that we owe to him, by internal acts of our mind, by our love, and fear, and hope, and admiration; because he sees our hearts and discerns the most secret motions of our souls; yet since to him we owe the members of our bodies, as well as the faculties of our minds, it is very reasonable that we should worship him with both, that both our bodies and minds should offer the tribute of homage which they owe to the fountain of their beings; that so having each of them a share in the bounties of God, they may be copartners too in the returns of gratitude to him. And though the inter-

nal acts of our minds do sufficiently signify unto God our esteem and veneration of him; yet it is highly reasonable, especially in our public addresses to him, that we should signify it to men also; that they may be excited by our example to glorify God, and to acknowledge and adore the infinite perfections of his nature. And we have no other way to signify to men our veneration of God, but only by corporeal actions; that is, by such actions or gestures of the body, as either by nature or by custom are significant of our inward esteem and adoration of him. And this, without doubt, is a part of natural religion; forasmuch as there never was any people of any religion whatsoever, but what have always expressed their veneration of the divinities whom they owned, by such external reverences as were customary amongst them. And accordingly we are enjoined in scripture to offer up unto God the homage of our bodies as well as of our souls; *to worship and bow down*, and *kneel before the Lord our maker*, Psalm xcv. 6. and *to glorify him with our souls and bodies, which are his*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. And when the Devil solicited our Saviour with the promise of all the kingdoms of the world, to bow down and worship him, that is, to render him external homage and reverence, our Saviour rejects the motion with an, *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matth. iv. 10. Which words must be understood of external as well as internal worship; otherwise his answer is nowise pertinent to the Devil's proposals, which extended only to external worship and adoration.

And as bodily worship is enjoined by express precept, so it is warranted by the concurrent examples

of all holy men; for in the Old Testament you have almost as many examples of it as there are instances of devout and religious persons: and so observant were the Jews of all external reverence in their religious exercises, that *to fall down, and kneel before the Lord our maker*, seems to have been proverbial of their prayers and public worship. And lest any man should imagine these bodily reverences to have been part of that ceremonial worship that was abolished by the gospel, there are sufficient examples of it recorded in the New Testament, both to excite and warrant our imitation. For even the blessed Jesus himself, who *thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, yet being in *the form of a servant*, he thought it no scorn to kneel and prostrate himself before him. For thus when he was in his last agony, it is said, that *he fell on his face, and prayed*, Matt. xxvi. 39. which in those eastern countries was a signification of the profoundest reverence: and afterwards, when having awoke his disciples he returned to his prayer again, St. Luke tells us, that he *fell upon his knees and prayed*, Luke xxii. 41. Thus of St. Stephen, when he was breathing out his soul in that hearty prayer for his enemies, it is said, that *he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*, Acts vii. 60. So also St. Peter, when he came to raise Tabitha from the dead, is said to *kneel down and pray*, Acts ix. 40. And St. Paul acquainting the Ephesians how earnestly he prayed for them, thus expresses himself: *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Ephes. iii. 14. And when he was going to Rome, and had taken his last farewell of the brethren at Miletum, it is said, that *he*

kneeled down, and prayed with them, Acts xx. 36. And how loudly soever some of our new-fashioned Christians may explode external reverence under a pretence of worshipping God in a more spiritual manner, it is certain, that there never was any thing, even externally, more devout and solemn, than the religious assemblies of the primitive Christians. For generally, at the reading of their public liturgies, the whole congregation kneeled down upon the bare floor with their heads uncovered, their eyes lift up to heaven, and their hands stretched forth in the fashion of a cross; and then, the whole congregation being composed into a deep silence, the minister began the public service in a most serious and humble manner; not throwing about his prayers at random with a clamorous, wild, and confused voice; but pronouncing them with a most decorous calmness and modesty; the people in the mean time demeaning themselves so solemnly and uniformly, that you would have thought the whole assembly to have been animated with one soul, and that soul to have been nothing else but a vital sense of the adorable majesty and supereminent perfections of God. So heavenly wide was the primitive pattern from the rudeness and irreverence of our modern devotions, that I doubt not, should these blessed martyrs and confessors of our holy religion arise from their graves, and come into our public assemblies, they would suspect that we met together rather to be worshipped by God, than to worship him; our usual postures being much fitter for judges than for supplicants, and such as rather bespeak us to be receiving petitions from God, than offering up prayers to him. For what sign do we give that we come to worship the great Majesty

above, when we rudely squat upon our seats with our hats half on, as if we thought it too great a condescension to uncover our heads, and kneel before *the Lord our maker;* and that we made not bold enough with him, unless we treated him as our fellow, and it were a piece of holy familiarity to be saucy in our language and irreverent in our addresses to him?

But by what hath been said, I think it is apparent, that bodily worship is of so much account and necessity in religion, that to neglect it is a piece of great injustice to God, and an high affront to his majesty, whereunto we owe the lowliest homage and adoration. But after all, it must be acknowledged, that unless our bodily worship be attended with an inward lively sense of God, with great and worthy thoughts of him, and suitable affections towards him, it is all but a perfect pageantry; which, though it makes a goodly show, hath nothing of substance or reality in it: nay, if by those external reverences we render him, we do not express the inward veneration of our souls, while we pretend to worship him, we mock him to his face; and by offering him a shell which hath no kernel in it, we only seek to put a trick upon him, to make him believe we honour and adore him, when in reality we do but more demurely flout him, and with our mock obeisances affront him with greater ceremony. If therefore we do not bow our hearts before him as well as our knees, in our most solemn addresses to him, we are but so many lifeless images of prayer, that, like our grandfathers' statues on their tombs, have our hands and eyes lift up to heaven, but no soul to animate our devotions. But God expects that those that worship him should

approach him with pure and humble minds, with their wills inspired with divine affections, and their souls touched with an overawing sense of his majesty; without which he accounts all our bodily adoration to be nothing but demure scorns and complimental mockeries; and therefore upon this very account God denounced most fearful judgments against Israel, because *they drew near him with their mouths, and with their lips did honour him, when their hearts were removed far from him*, Isa. xxix. 13.

Sixthly and lastly, Another sort of bodily exercise that is of some, though but little account in religion, is a mere outward form or round of religious duties; such as saying of our prayers, hearing the word of God, and receiving of sacraments, and the like; which are all of them expressly enjoined by the Christian religion, as the means by which we are to purge our minds from all impurity and wickedness, and to acquire those divine habits of piety and virtue which are necessary to qualify us for eternal life: and without all doubt, such means they are, as, if rightly used, will, by the blessing of God, and their own natural efficacy, exceedingly conduce to those great and worthy ends for which they were ordained. For what means can be more conducive to our reformation and amendment, than constant and diligent prayer? For besides hereby we move God to enable us to do our duty by his own grace and assistance, by these our solemn addresses to him we take an effectual course to abstract our minds from carnal and sensitive things; to excite and raise our affections towards God, and inspire our souls with an awful sense of his majesty; which are the most rational antidotes we can take against the venomous

temptations of sin. How necessary is it to make us throughly good, that we should seriously and diligently attend upon the preaching and public ministers of God's word; the great end of which is to state and describe the bounds of Christian duty, and to explain and enforce those mighty motives which Christianity urges to oblige us to it! Both which are indispensably necessary to our reformation; because a man cannot be good, unless he knows his duty; and when he knows it, he will not be good, unless he be persuaded to it. What can be more conducive to our growth and progress in all Christian grace and virtue, than frequent receiving of the holy sacrament? which, besides, as it is a channel and conveyance of the divine grace and assistance to all worthy communicants, doth sensibly represent to us one of the mightiest arguments to obedience in all the Christian religion, viz. the death and sacrifice of our blessed Redeemer. For here we see his bloody tragedy acted before our eyes; the breaking of his body and the pouring out of his blood for us being visibly represented to us; which dismal spectacle (if we have any remains of ingenuity in us) cannot but affect us both with love to him who suffered so deeply for us, and with horror against our sins, which brought those sufferings upon him: and being thus affected, how can we forbear vowing revenge upon our sins, and perpetual obedience to our most loving Redeemer, which is one of the great ends of this sacred festival? So that these outward duties are not only necessary, as they are enjoined by our religion; but also as they are effectual means and instruments of that internal piety and virtue which our religion doth principally require and design:

and therefore doubtless it cannot but be a great sin for any Christian to live in the ordinary neglect of these instrumental duties; because in so doing he doth not only affront the authority of that holy religion to which he hath vowed submission and obedience, but also rejects the means of his own recovery and reformation; and so doth openly declare himself a reckless profligate creature, one that neither is good, nor ever intends to be so.

But yet, after all, it must be acknowledged, that he that only prays, and hears, and places all his religion in a perpetual round of these outward performances, hath nothing of the life and spirit of true religion in him: for, as I have already observed to you, these duties are intended only for means and instruments of that internal purity of mind, and those divine and godlike dispositions of soul, wherein the life and substance of religion doth consist. Now you know, it is not barely the using of means that either is or doth good; but the using them to some good end or purpose: as for instance, books are means and instruments of learning; but it is not barely the using of books, or turning over the leaves of them, that will make men wise or learned; but the using them so as to understand the contents of them, and acquaint themselves with the things and notions contained in them. Thus prayer, and hearing the word of God, and receiving of sacraments, are doubtless excellent means to make men good and virtuous; but barely to use them, without any farther intention, is to do a thing that signifies nothing; that neither is good in itself, nor will do any good to us. If we would use them to any purpose, we must use them to the end they are designed for, or else we

had as good not use them at all. For we may as soon become good scholars barely by turning over the leaves of learned books, as we shall good Christians barely by praying, and hearing, and receiving. If we do not pray, to the end we may be more humble and heavenly-minded; if we do not hear, and receive sacraments, to the end we may be more just, and charitable, and meek, and temperate; we take a great deal of pains to no purpose. For though a hammer and a file are excellent tools to make a watch or a clock, or any such curious machine; yet doubtless you would account that man extremely impertinent, that should reckon himself a skilful mechanic, merely because he knocks and files with them. And by the same rule, though prayers and sacraments are excellent instruments of Christian piety and virtue; yet it is a ridiculous vanity for a man to esteem himself a good Christian, merely because he prays and communicates: because as the art of the mechanic consists not barely in using his tools, but in using them so as to perfect and accomplish his work with them; so the virtue of a Christian consists not barely in praying, hearing, and receiving, but in using these duties with that religious art and skill, as is necessary to render them effectually subservient to the ends of piety and virtue: and unless we use them to these ends, we were as good not use them at all, for any benefit we are like to reap from them. For what doth it signify for a man to confess his sins to God, if he only go round in a circle of confessing and sinning, and sinning and confessing again? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, do we think, to hear us read over, with tragical looks and woful tones, the odious catalogue of our uncancelled guilts? Is he so

fond of affronts and injuries we do him, as to take delight in hearing them recounted? No, doubtless, it is impossible. It is true, he hath commanded us to confess our sins to him; but why hath he done so? Why, that our confession might be instrumental to our reformation; that it might affect us with shame and sorrow for our sins, and horror and indignation against them: and if this be not the effect of it, we do but blazon our shame, when we confess our sins, and prefer a bill of indictment against ourselves. To what purpose do we daily offer up our prayers unto God, if we do not endeavour by our lives to please him? Can we imagine him so easy a sovereign, as to be soothed and flattered with the humble petitions and entreaties of open and avowed rebels? Certainly, if we do, we are infinitely mistaken. He bids us pray to him indeed; but why? Why, that by our constant addresses to him we might be always affected with so deep a sense of his sovereignty over us, and our own dependence upon him, as might keep us continually in awe of him: and if this be not the effect of our prayers, we only talk to the air, and spend our breath to no purpose. To what end do we praise God, and make rhetorical acknowledgments of his glory and goodness, if we do not imitate him in those perfections for which we admire and laud him? Do we think, so wise, so great a Being can ever be pleased and tickled to hear himself extolled and commended by a little of that fading breath which himself gave being to? Alas, no; he needs not our poor praises to emblazon and magnify him, being infinitely glorious in his own perfections, and a sufficient stage and theatre to himself. It is true, he bids us praise him; but why?

Why, that he might provoke us to imitate what we do commend, and to transcribe into our own selves those adorable perfections which we laud and admire in him: and if this be not the effect of our praising him, all the good we say of him is nothing but flattery and compliment. To what purpose do we come to church to hear sermons and pious exhortations, if we do not live them too? Do we think to please God by meeting together to gratify our ears or curiosity with some new notions or quaint piece of oratory? If we do, we are much mistaken. He hath commanded us indeed diligently to attend the public preaching and ministers of religion: and why hath he done so, but only that we might learn his will, and be instructed in the motives to obedience? And if this be not the effect of our hearing, we had as good spend our time in hearing the whistling of the wind or the roaring of the sea. In a word, to what end do we receive the holy sacrament, if we do not improve in virtue by it? Do you think to please an allwise God by eating a little bread and drinking a little wine in a devout and humble posture? Is it likely that so wise a Being should be taken with such an insignificant trifle? It is true, he hath instituted this holy solemnity for a perpetual memory of our Saviour's passion: but is this all, do you think? Has he commanded us to meet, and eat, and drink together, only to remember, that a great while ago the blessed Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem? No, doubtless; that which he ultimately designed by this solemn memorial was to inflame our love, to confirm our faith, and strengthen our resolutions of obedience; and if this be not the effect of it, our receiving the sacrament

is of no more account in religion, than if we should eat and drink only to satisfy our hunger and thirst.

This I have the longer insisted upon, because it is so ordinary for men to place all their religion in those instrumental duties, and to believe themselves highly in favour with God, merely because they pray very often, and hear a great many sermons, and are constant communicants at the Lord's table; when, God knows, all this is only the religion of the means, and is good only as it tends farther to produce in us a divine temper of mind, and to make us sober, and righteous, and godly, in this present world: which, if it doth not effect, it doth nothing at all, but is altogether vain and insignificant. Wherefore, as you would not deceive and ruin your own souls, beware of mistaking the means of godliness for godliness itself; and of taking up your rest there, where you should only bait, in order to a farther progress; lest, falling short of your duty, you fall short of the reward of it, and in the end receive your portion with hypocrites in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

II. Having shewed what that bodily exercise is, which profits something in religion, though, compared with godliness itself, but very little; I now proceed to the second thing proposed, which was, to shew you in what respects it is that this bodily exercise doth profit but little. In general, it profits but little in respect of those great and noble ends which religion doth most principally aim at: for there are four great advantages which religion doth principally design and intend us.

1. To reconcile us unto God.

2. To perfect our natures.
3. To entitle us to heaven.
4. To qualify us for heaven.

And to each of these, these kinds of bodily exercise are no farther profitable, than as they conduce to a holy life, and internal purity and goodness; which is that alone by which these great advantages are to be obtained: so that, though they profit something, yea, very much, as they are the means of godliness, yet, compared with godliness itself, they profit but very little; because these are only instrumental to make us godly; but it is godliness alone that reconciles us unto God, and perfects our natures, and qualifies us for heaven. In these four respects therefore, these kinds of bodily exercise do, in comparison with godliness, profit but very little.

1. As to the reconciling us to God. It is true this bodily religion is instrumental to reconcile us unto God, so far as it tends to purify our minds, and to inspire us with a divine and godlike nature; but farther than this it hath no influence at all upon it: for there is nothing can reconcile God to us, or us to God, but only a mutual likeness and agreement. While we continue in our sins, we cannot love God, our nature being repugnant to his, who is infinitely holy, and pure, and good; nor can he love us, his nature being repugnant to ours, which is vile, and wicked, and unreasonable. And how can two natures be reconciled which have such mutual antipathies to each other? how can we love him whilst we are so prevalently averse to all that is lovely and amiable in him, and so unreasonably fond of every thing that he hates and abhors? Doubtless, while there is such a contrariety between God and us, it is

impossible we should love him without hating ourselves. Hence the apostle tells us, that the *carnal mind is not only an enemy, but that it is enmity itself to God*, Rom. viii. 7. it is spite and rancour in the abstract; being as repugnant to his pure and holy nature, as heaven is to hell, or light to darkness. And the same apostle gives us an account of this enmity, and shews us from whence it doth arise, Col. i. 21. *And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works.* These are the makebates that infuse into our souls a secret enmity to God, by inspiring them with such dispositions as are altogether repugnant to the purity and holiness of his nature; and there is nothing will extinguish these wicked dispositions, from whence our enmity to God doth arise, but only the contrary habits of virtue and true goodness. So that all our bodily exercises in religion do no otherwise tend to reconcile our minds to God, than as they are instrumental to destroy the body of sin in us, and to beget in us the divine and godlike nature; which if they do not effect, they will leave us at as great a distance from God as ever they found us; and after all our professions and bodily severities, our rapturous passions in religion, and fluent strains of devotion; after our hearing, and praying, and receiving of sacraments, we shall be found as utter enemies to God as ever we were before. For there is nothing can reconcile the mind of a man to God, but only a thorough conformity and agreement in nature with him. And as we cannot be reconciled to God without being godly, so neither can God be reconciled to us. It is true he bears a hearty good-will to all his creation, and earnestly desires the welfare of every being that

he hath made capable of any degree of happiness; and there is no man whatsoever excluded from this his universal benevolence, which with outstretched arms embraces the whole creation: but it is impossible he should love any, so as to be pleased with or delighted in them, but only those that are good: for though his love be terminated upon infinite objects, yet it is founded upon unchangeable reason, and that is true goodness, which is the only motive of wise and reasonable love. Thus he loves himself, not purely because he is himself; for that would be rather an instinct than a reasonable love; but because he is good: and he loves himself above all other things, not out of a blind, unreasonable fondness to himself, but because he knows himself to be the highest and most perfect good. And if, upon an impossible supposition, he were less good than he is, he would doubtless love himself less than he doth: but because his own essence is the fairest copy and most perfect idea of goodness, therefore, if he love reasonably, he must love himself most; and, consequently, love all other things proportionably as they approach and resemble himself in goodness, and purity, and holiness. For if he love himself best, because he is most good, he must necessarily love all other things proportionably as they are more or less good: and indeed he could not love himself infinitely, should he love us for any other reason but that for which he loves himself: for he can love himself no farther than he hath reason for it; and therefore, if he had other reasons to love us, beyond what he hath to love himself, he would not love himself infinitely, because he would not have infinite reason for it. So that it is plain God loves himself and us for the same general

reason. And as he doth not love himself but because he is good, so he doth not love us merely because we are such and such men, out of a peculiar fondness to our individual persons, but because we resemble him in that goodness and purity for which he loves himself. For one of these three things we must say; that either God loves us for no reason at all, which would be a degrading of his most wise love into a foolish fondness; or else that he loves us for our sins, which would be to make him love different objects, himself and us, upon contrary reasons; or, that he loves us for our goodness, and conformity to his own most pure and perfect nature. This therefore is that alone that will reconcile God to us, and without this all our bodily religion is insignificant. Though we should profess religion with the constancy of martyrs, and our whole lives were a continued rapture of religious passions; though we should fast ourselves into skeletons, and pray till our knees clave to the ground; though we should live upon sacraments, and hear as many sermons as there are hours in the day; yet if upon all this we do not grow more charitable and benevolent, more honest and temperate, more humble and heavenly-minded, it will be all to no purpose; for when all is done, there is nothing but true goodness can endear us to the good God. So that it is apparent, that notwithstanding all our bodily exercises, so long as we continue in our sins, there is so vast a gulf between God and us, that neither we can go to him, nor he come to us; and, unless God alters his nature, by becoming impure, as we are impure, or we alter ours, by becoming pure, as he is pure, so immense is the distance between him and us, that it is impossible we

should ever meet and agree. What the prophet therefore says of sacrifice may be said of all bodily religion; *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil?* Will he be reconciled with zealous professions, fluent prayers, or melting passions? No, no: *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 7, 8.

2. Bodily exercise profits but little in comparison with godliness, as to the perfecting of our natures. It is true this bodily exercise is instrumental of our perfection, so far as it promotes in us the virtues of godliness and religion; if it makes us meek, and humble, and just, and charitable, and temperate; if it inspires us with a sincere love to God, and a dutiful awe and dread of his majesty; if it produces in us a hearty submission to his will, and a constant dependence upon his truth and goodness; then indeed it doth effectually conduce to the perfection and accomplishment of our natures, it being productive of that wherein the perfection of our natures doth consist. But if these are not the effects of it, we are never the better for it; and after all our hearing, and praying, and professing, our nature will be still as maimed and imperfect as ever it was before. For the perfection of a rational nature consists not in forms and outsides, and such and such bodily motions and mechanical exercises of our sense and passion, but in being wise and good; in having our understandings informed with the principles of right reason, and our wills and affections regulated by them. For to be a perfect man is to live up to the highest principle of human nature, and that is

reason; which is the proper character of our beings, that distinguishes us from all sublunary natures, and sets us in a form of being above them. When therefore we are released from the slaveries of sense and passion, and all our powers are perfectly subdued to this superior principle, as to do every thing that it commands, and nothing that it forbids; and we choose and refuse, and love and hate, and hope and fear, and desire and delight, according as right reason directs and dictates to us; then, and not till then, we are come to the full stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Now what else is godliness, but only an habit of living according to the laws of reason, or an accustoming ourselves in all our circumstances to do those things that are most fit and reasonable; to demean ourselves towards God, ourselves, and all the world, with the devotion, sobriety, and justice, as becomes rational beings placed in our condition and circumstances? This is godliness: and till we are in some measure arrived to this, our faculties are wholly out of joint, notwithstanding all our bodily religion. For so long as we live in a state of sin, we live in rebellion to our own reason, and the natural polity of our souls is dissolved into a wild confused anarchy. Our reason, that was made to govern us, is enslaved by its own vassals, and forced to truckle to our passions and appetites. The law in our members controls the law in our minds, and countermands the dictates of our purest reason; and so our nature is turned upside down, and the cardinal points of our motion changed into quite contrary positions. And so far is our nature from being perfected without godliness, that it is the most wretched confused thing in the whole world; a mere

undistinguished chaos, where *frigida cum calidis*, sense and reason, brute and man, are shuffled together in a heap of rude and undigested ruins. And being in this sick, disorderly condition, what can recover us, but only inuring and accustoming ourselves to live godlily; or, which is all one, according to the prescripts of right reason? This by degrees will re-advance our reason to its native throne, and reduce our rebellious passions and appetites to a pure and spiritual mind: this will set our disjointed faculties in order, and restore our decayed nature to its primitive health and vigour. For by inuring ourselves to a life of reason, our passions and appetites will by degrees be tamed and civilized, so that at length it will be natural and easy to us; and then we shall cheerfully go on from one degree of virtue to another, till all the unevennesses of our natures are filed off, and our souls are polished into living images of the most perfect God; till we come to that heavenly permanent state of ever knowing and doing that which is best and most reasonable: and this is the utmost pitch of perfection that any reasonable nature can aspire to. So that it is godliness alone that doth perfect our natures, and restore us to the pure state of reasonable beings. For to be perfectly godly is to be perfectly conformable to the eternal laws of reason; and he that is so is advanced to the utmost pitch of perfection that his reasonable nature is capable of.

3. Bodily exercise profits but little in comparison with godliness, as to the entitling us to heaven and eternal life: for God hath been so gracious, as not only to assure us that there is a heaven and future happiness, but he hath also promised it to us upon

certain terms and conditions; that by performing these we might not only believe that there is a heaven, but also be inspired with a certain hope of enjoying it. For upon our performing the condition upon which heaven is promised to us, we are vested with such an inalienable right to it, as we can never be disseized of, unless the God of truth break his word, which he can never do, until he ceases to be God. This therefore is one great advantage which religion doth design us, to beget in us such a lively hope of that blessed immortality which it promises to us, as might carry us cheerfully through the weary stages of our duty, and support our minds under all the calamities of this present world. And without all doubt, the hope of heaven is the greatest blessing that we are capable of on this side heaven. For if we had all the world before us, and every pleasure of it were distilled to a quintessence, to feast our desires and entertain our lickerish appetites, what a poor inconsiderable trifle would it be, compared with the hope of being transformed into the likeness of God, and dwelling for ever in his presence, there to spend a blissful eternity with saints and angels, archangels and seraphims, in one continued everlasting act of love and joy! What mean things are all the sickly joys, the empty, flat, evanid pleasures this world doth afford us, compared with the ravishing pleasures and divine contentments that spring from such vast and mighty hopes! This hope of heaven therefore being so highly advantageous to us, God hath therefore promised it to us upon certain terms and conditions; that so we might have a sure foundation to build our hope upon; that we might know upon what grounds we are to expect that blessed reward, which

we could never have done, had God left himself free to withhold or bestow it upon us, according to the arbitrary, and, to us, uncertain determinations of his will, and not bequeathed it to us upon such conditions by his own irrevocable promise. That therefore which gives us a right to heaven, and is the only true ground of our hopes of it, is our performing the condition upon which it is promised to us; and the condition upon which it is promised to us is nothing less than true and universal godliness. And hence the apostle tells us, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And our Saviour, in Matth. v. restrains the beatitudes of the other world to those that are *poor in spirit* and *pure in heart*, that are benign and merciful, that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, and that endure the unjust persecutions of the world with Christian patience, and courage, and constancy. And the promise of eternal life is limited by the apostle to those *who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality*, Rom. ii. 7. And if godliness be the sole condition of eternal life, then it necessarily follows, that all our bodily exercises in religion do no farther conduce to make us godly and virtuous; which if they do not effect, they give us no more right to heaven, or ground to hope for it, than the most indifferent actions in the world. Hence our Saviour hath told us beforehand, that we may know what to trust to, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*, Matth. vii. 21. that is, Not every one that professes my name, and acknowledges me for his Lord and

Master, and makes solemn prayers and addresses to me, shall be admitted into the kingdom of happiness: such outward bodily exercises as these will never entitle any man unto that blessed condition. Though you should profess my name never so solemnly, and pray to me with never so much fervour and earnestness, yet do not think I will be bribed by such trifles to connive at your sins, and admit you into heaven, notwithstanding all your impieties. No, no; I do assure you beforehand, that you may know what to trust to, that there is nothing but your sincere submission to the will of my Father shall ever persuade me to receive you into his heavenly kingdom. Let us not therefore flatter ourselves any longer with vain expectances of heaven upon the account of our bodily religion: for unless our natures are changed, and our minds reformed and bettered by it, we may as well lay claim to heaven, because we eat, and drink, and sleep, as because we pray, and hear, and receive sacraments. For though these bodily exercises are profitable means to entitle us to heaven, yet it is only upon this account, because they are means to make us good: but if they do not effect this, they are all but so many insignificant ciphers. He therefore that builds his hope of heaven merely upon bodily religion, builds upon a sandy foundation, which if he finally trust to will sink under him, and bury him in eternal ruins.

4. And lastly, Bodily exercise profits but little in comparison with godliness, as to the qualifying us for heaven, which is a distinct consideration from the former. For supposing we could have a right to heaven, without being disposed and qualified for it, it would be no advantage at all to us: for before

we can enjoy heaven, our minds must be reconciled to the pleasures and delights of it, or else it is impossible they should be pleasures to us. Now in the temper of every wicked mind there is a natural antipathy unto all those pure and spiritual joys wherewith the heavenly state abounds; which being pure, and chaste, and refined, can never agree with the vitiated palate of a base degenerate soul. For what concord can there be between spiteful and devilish spirits, and the fountain of all love and goodness? between sensual and carnalized souls, that understand no other pleasures but only those of the flesh, and those pure and virgin spirits that never eat nor drink, but live for ever upon wisdom and holiness, and love and contemplation? How could I be happy in seeing that God whom I cannot love; in conversing with those spirits whose genius and temper I do abhor; and in being for ever employed in those heavenly exercises to which I have the greatest aversation? No, no; till I am of the same disposition with the celestial inhabitants, and my mind is contempered to the heavenly state, it is impossible that heaven and I should ever agree; and I may as well see without eyes, or hear without ears, as enjoy heaven without a heavenly disposition. For as to the main, we shall be of the same temper of mind when we come into the other world as we are while we continue in this, it being unimaginable how our disposition should be totally changed merely by passing out of one world into another: and therefore, as in this world it is likeness that doth congregate and associate beings together, so doubtless it is in the other too: so that if we carry thither with us our wicked, devilish dispositions, (as we shall doubtless

do, unless we subdue and mortify them here,) there will be no company fit for us to associate with, but only the devils, and damned ghosts of wicked men; with whom our wretched spirits being already joined by a likeness of nature, will be forced to congregate, as soon as ever they are excommunicated from the society of mortals. For whither should they flock, but to the birds of their own feather? Where should they join society, but with those malignant spirits to whom they are joined already by a community of natures? For supposing that when they are landed in eternity, it were left at their own liberty to go either to heaven or to hell; yet heaven would be no place for them, the air of that bright empire of eternal day would never agree with their black and hellish natures: for, alas! what should they do among those blessed souls that inhabit it, to whose godlike natures, divine conversations, and heavenly employments, they have the greatest repugnancy and aversation? From hence therefore it is apparent, that to our comfortable possession of heaven, it is not only necessary we should have a right to it, but also that we should be prepared and qualified for it: and as to this, all our bodily exercises in religion are no farther profitable, than as they are effectual means of true substantial godliness. For when the soul goes out of this body, it must leave all this bodily religion behind it, and carry nothing with it into eternity, but only those divine virtues and heavenly dispositions, which by the means of this bodily religion it did here acquire. For our outward professions and bodily severities and passions, our praying and hearing, and receiving of sacraments, are all but scaffolds to this heavenly building of inward

purity and goodness: and when once this is finished for eternity, then must these scaffolds go down, as things of no farther use or necessity; but as for the graces of the mind, they shall stand for ever, as the only fit habitations of the heavenly pleasures. And therefore it is impossible that these our bodily exercises should formally dispose our souls for heaven, since in heaven they shall wholly cease. For although our love, and joy, and all our sweeter affections, shall there be kept in everlasting exercise, yet shall they be wholly refined from all bodily passion; because there we shall be stripped into naked and unbodied spirits: our love shall unite our wills to God and the whole choir of blessed spirits, without any warmth of spirit or expansions of heart: our joy, being purely the jubilee of our minds, and the recreation of our reason, shall flow without shouts or noises, in a most sweet but silent current; and the whole scene of our happiness shall be transacted on the stage of our reason. There being therefore no room for bodily exercise in this heavenly state, it is impossible we should be qualified by it for the enjoyment of heaven: but doubtless our fitness for heaven must consist in such inherent qualities of mind as separate souls may carry to heaven with them. And what these are may be easily concluded by considering what the employment of heaven is; which, so far as we are given to understand of it, consists in contemplating and adoring the Divinity, and in conversing with those pure and blessed spirits that dwell for ever in his presence. Now to make us fit for such an employment, the only necessary qualities of mind are an universal love and a profound humility; which two are the fundamental virtues of religion;

of which all the other virtues are so many different operations. It is true, our love and humility will not have all the same operations in the other world as they have in this, because there we shall not have the same occasions for them: for being placed above all sufferings in the enjoyment of the most perfect good, we shall have no occasion either for the passive virtues of patience, and meekness, and forgiveness of injuries; nor yet for those active virtues which speak us distant from our happiness, such as faith and hope, which shall be swallowed up in vision and fruition. But though in that blessed state we shall have no occasion to express our love and humility in such acts as these, yet without these two great virtues we shall be no ways capable of the heavenly employment: for what pleasure can we take in contemplating the being of God, if we do not love him? Doubtless our own antipathy to the goodness and purity of his nature will either avert our eyes from beholding him, or render the sight of him horrible and dreadful to us. And if we do not contemplate him with an humble and lowly mind, the sight of his supereminent perfections will either provoke our envy or contempt, make us pine to see ourselves outshone by him, or contemn his glories out of an overweening opinion of our own. Again, if we do not love God, we cannot adore him with a free and cheerful mind; and if we are proud and self-conceited, instead of God, we shall adore ourselves, and become our own idols and votaries. So that without humility and love we shall be no ways fit for the other part of that sweet employment which consists in conversing with holy and blessed spirits; for their conversation being wholly regulated

by the sacred laws of wise and holy friendship, and consisting in an everlasting intercourse of chaste and mutual endearments, no soul can be capable of bearing a part in it, that is not inspired with universal love and great humility; both which are indispensably necessary to every wise and friendly conversation. For where humility is wanting, every offence will kindle an unquenchable discord. So that a proud malicious nature can converse no where with satisfaction; much less with those blessed souls, in whose most pure and perfect friendship there is not the least intermixture either of flattery or envy: for being all perfectly good and perfectly happy, they can neither overvalue themselves, nor envy what another enjoys: so that in all their conversation there is no entertainment either for pride or malice, but on the contrary, there is nothing but what is distasteful to them; for where there are none that overvalue either themselves or others, but every one loves every one with a sincere and inviolable friendship, there can be no conversation but what is distasteful to an arrogant and malicious temper. What then should a proud malignant spirit do among those happy beings, a great part of whose heaven consists in rejoicing in each others' happiness? Doubtless, could such a spirit be admitted into their society, their bliss would so enrage its envy, their perfection so upbraid its baseness, that it would find nothing but causes of discontent in a conversation so disagreeable to its nature. So that without universal love and profound humility there is nothing in heaven that we can enjoy, there being no employment in that blessed state that is agreeable to the genius of a proud and malicious mind. So that

unless our bodily religion doth make us really good, by begetting in us those heavenly virtues of humility and love, it is altogether impertinent as to the disposing of us for heaven; and after all our fasting, and praying, and hearing, and receiving of sacraments, we shall be found as remote from heaven, and as unprepared for it, as if we had spent our time in gathering cockles, or telling the sands upon the seashore. So that though this bodily exercise be highly useful and necessary to our reformation and amendment, and is in itself a very conducive means to internal holiness and goodness; yet compared with godliness itself, wherein our holiness and goodness doth consist, it is of very little account, either as to the reconciling us to God, or the perfecting our natures, or to the entitling us to heaven, or qualifying us for it.

Now from hence we may learn what the true end is of external and bodily religion: it is not required for its own sake, without any farther end or intention; but for the sake of godliness, which is the ultimate mark at which it ought to be levelled and directed. And therefore, as he that would build an house must make use of the means, the tools and materials of building; but if he think to build the house merely by using these means, by cutting the wood and carving in stone, without any farther aim or intention, he will find himself extremely mistaken: so he that would be godly must use the means of godliness; he must profess the true religion, and pray, and hear, and receive sacraments; but he that thinks he is godly merely because he uses these means, though he doth not at all concern himself to direct them unto the end for which they were designed, doth but deceive and abuse his own soul. For, for God's sake,

what doth it signify for a man to pray in his family, and afterwards to go and cheat in his shop? to keep the Lord's day strictly, and play the knave all the week after? What doth it avail for a man to hear the word of God, if he make no conscience of obeying it? to receive the sacrament of charity, if he still retain hatred and ill-will to his neighbours? Do we think that God is so fond of these instrumental duties of religion, as for their sakes to dispense with these gross and fulsome immoralities? No, no; these are things only fit to cheat children and fools withal. But let us not imagine that the wise and holy God will be so imposed upon; that when he hath ordained the duties only as the means of acquiring that universal purity and goodness which he principally intends and requires, he will be contented barely with your using these means, whether the great ends for which he designed them be ever obtained by you or no. If you should enjoin your servant to copy out such a letter or manuscript, and for that end should require him to use pen, ink, and paper; would you not think him extremely absurd or insolent, should he come and shew you a large insignificant scribble, and tell you, that according to your command he had used the pen, ink, and paper, though indeed he had not transcribed one word with them of what you did command and enjoin him? And yet thus rudely and insolently do you deal with God, who place all your religion in the instrumental duties of it. God doth require of you that you should copy out his justice, purity, and goodness, and transcribe them into your own natures; and in order to your doing of this, he hath prescribed you certain means and instruments, such as prayer, and hearing, and re-

ceiving of sacraments; and when you come to give him an account of that mighty task he hath enjoined you, you shew him an insignificant flourish of religion, and have nothing to say for yourselves, but that according to his appointment you have prayed, and heard, and received sacraments: but you must confess, that with all these you have not transcribed one tittle or iota of that purity and holiness which he required at your hands. Is this a proper account, do you think, to be given to the wise and holy Sovereign of the world? Would you be thus mocked by your own servants? And dare you presume thus to mock the great God, between whom and you there is infinitely a greater distance, than between you and the meanest vassal about you? In the name of God, for what end do you pray? Is it to please him with a fine speech, or an humble and eloquent address? or is it to persuade him, by your fawning submissions, to befriend you in all your wickedness and rebellion against him? If either of these be your aims, I must plainly tell you, you were as good save your breath for some other purpose. But if you pray to him upon a sincere design, to affect your minds with an awful sense, and to obtain of him grace to enable you to repent and amend, and for pardon and mercy upon your unfeigned repentance; then your prayer must necessarily make you more meek, and humble, and industrious to please him, by a free and generous obedience. To what purpose do you come to hear the word of God? Do you think it gratifies the Almighty, that you will please to give him the hearing? or that you meet in the public assemblies to furnish your heads with notions and your tongues with discourse? If this be your opinion, I must needs tell

you, you have very mean apprehensions of God, to think him a being capable to be pleased with such a mean and inconsiderable trifle: but if you come with humble, honest, and teachable minds, to learn the will of God, in order to your obeying it, your hearing will necessarily lead you to the practice of all those excellent virtues which God requires at your hands. What do you design when you receive the sacrament? Is it to please God with offering vows to him which you do not mean to perform? to pacify him with a short pang of religious passion, with shedding a few tears over your bleeding Saviour? or to get your pardon sealed with the blood of the covenant, without repentance and reformation? If so, I must needs tell you, you receive the sacrament to no other purpose, but only to deceive and abuse your own souls. But if you come with an honest design to remember the great things which your Saviour hath done for you; to excite your love to him with the spectacle of his passion, and to renew your communion with the saints, and your vows of obedience unto God; you will then infallibly be made better by it, and be more and more accomplished in every part of true and real goodness. So that unless we perform this outward and bodily religion to the purposes of true godliness, we perform it to no purpose at all. Let me therefore beseech you, even for God's sake, and your own souls, do not rest in this bodily religion: think not that you have done enough, when you have fasted, and prayed, and heard, and received sacraments; for if you do, you are short of your duty, and will infallibly fall short of the reward of it. These things, indeed, we must by no means neglect, they being the means and instruments of our re-

formation: but if we do not use them as such, we take a great deal of pains to no purpose: if they do not render us more humble and charitable, more sober and heavenly-minded, we have spent all our labour in vain; and in the end shall have no other reward for it, but the portion of hypocrites in the lake of fire and brimstone.

DISCOURSE II.

UPON

EZEKIEL XVIII. 30.

Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

THE great design of this chapter is to answer an objection which the Jews were wont to make against the righteousness of God's procedure with them, viz. that he punished them, not only for their own, but for their fathers' sins. Which objection, though it did not at all impeach the righteousness of God, it being no injustice in him to inflict temporal evils upon the children for their fathers' sins; yet that they might urge it no more as a pretence of God's unrighteous dealing with them, God assures them by his prophet, that from thenceforth he would remit that right he had to make them smart for their fathers' iniquities, and inflict no other punishment upon them, than was due for their own personal faults; that if they did well, they should fare well, notwithstanding the sins of their parents; and that if they did wickedly, they should surely smart for it, how well soever their parents behaved themselves. Nay, says he, your fathers' merit or demerit shall henceforth be so far from excusing you from, or exposing you to punishment, that you shall not suffer for your own past wickedness, if you repent of it; nor yet escape for your past righteousness, if ye revolt from it. This is the sum of the whole chapter to the twenty-fourth verse. And yet, says he, *The*

house of Israel says, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel; are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? Can any method of rewarding and punishing be more equal than this I propose? or can any accusation be more unjust than this of yours against me? But know, it is not your unjust reproaches shall make me desist from this my most righteous procedure. *Therefore,* says he, verse the 30th, *I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways:* How much soever you reproach and calumniate me, I will strictly insist upon this method of rewarding and punishing you according as you repent of, or persevere in your iniquities: and to let you see that I will be as ready to reward you upon the former, as to punish you upon the latter, do but for once make a trial of me; *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions;* and you shall surely find that *your* past *iniquity shall not be your ruin.* The sense of which words resolves into two propositions:

I. That the iniquity of any people or nation tends directly to their ruin.

II. That true repentance and amendment is the certain way to prevent the ruin which iniquity tends to.

I begin with the first, that the iniquity of any people or nation tends directly to their ruin: *so it shall not*—intimating, that if they did not *repent,* their iniquity would certainly end in their ruin. And of the truth of this, the constant experience of all ages is a sufficient testimony: for if you consult either sacred or profane history, you will find, that iniquity, like the worm at the root of Jonah's gourd, hath many times blasted the most flourishing kingdoms, pulled

down their banks, and laid them open to such inundations of misery, as have finally overwhelmed and destroyed them. And those that have made the strictest inquiries into human affairs have constantly observed, that the rise and fall of nations hath been more owing to their virtue and vice, than any other cause, and that upon these two hinges, generally, the fates of empires turn; that the foundations of their rise were laid in virtuous, brave, and generous actions; and that by wickedness and corruption of manners, they were undermined, and sunk into a final ruin. But the truth of this will yet more fully appear by considering how many ways vice doth contribute to the ruin and destruction of a kingdom; all which I shall reduce to these eight heads:

1. It doth it by depriving kingdoms and nations of the favour and protection of God.

2. By inflicting positive plagues and punishments upon them.

3. By corrupting and infatuating their counsels.

4. By melting and emasculating their courage.

5. By breaking and disturbing their order.

6. By dissolving their unity and concord.

7. By consuming their wealth and substance.

8. By debasing their esteem and reputation.

1. Wickedness directly tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, as it deprives them of the divine favour and protection. For if we acknowledge God to be the Almighty Lord and Sovereign of the world, we cannot but confess, that the strength and establishment of kingdoms is founded in his favour and protection; that his goodness, wisdom, and power are the pillars upon which those vast and mighty structures lean; and consequently, that if he with-

draw from them those necessary supports, they cannot stand, but must inevitably sink under their own weight into irreparable ruins. For nothing can subsist without God, and much less kingdoms and nations, which have so many principles of corruption lurking within their own bowels, and in which there are compounded so many boisterous passions, repugnant humours, inconsistent designs, and contesting interests; all which, like the contrary qualities of our bodies, do by their mutual jarring with one another, continually tend to the dissolution of the whole. So that, did not the wise and almighty providence of God continually superintend these contrary principles, and by its skilful mingling them with one another preserve them in a just and due temper, those great and unwieldy bodies in which they do reside would be every moment in danger of being diseased, corrupted, and destroyed by them. But now the sins of nations do mightily contribute to the depriving them of this benefit of God's providence and protection. For how can any kingdom or nation expect that God will continue to protect them in their rebellions against himself? that he who is so implacable an enemy of wickedness, and so zealous an asserter of his own honour and authority, will employ his power to patronise them in the one, and take their part against the other. And if he withdraw his upholding providence from a nation, he needs do no more: for now it must sink of its own accord; and like a falling house, when its prop is removed, its weight will bear it down, and quickly crush it into ruins.

2. Wickedness tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, not only by engaging God to withdraw his

protection from, but also to inflict positive plagues and punishments upon them. For God being the supreme Sovereign of the world, and especially of this world of men, who are so extremely prone to contemn and violate the laws of his government; it is necessary, that since our hopes and fears are the master-springs of all our motions, he should take especial care, as on the one hand to allure us to our duty by the hope of a reward; so on the other to awe us into it by the fear of punishment: and if he should not, there would be no confining such extravagant creatures as we are within any rule or compass.

Now as for particular offenders, the great scene of God's rewarding and punishing them is the future state, where every man must answer for himself, and receive the just retributions of his own actions. But as for sinful and virtuous nations, they are capable only of being rewarded and punished in this life; there being no such thing as particular nations and kingdoms in the life to come; where heaven and hell are the two nations into which the spirits of men are distributed: so that if wicked nations were not punished here as such, they could never be punished at all. And if there were no such punishments set up, like banks and shores, to break the insolence, and check the overflowing wickedness of sinners, the whole world would soon become a sink and deluge of iniquity: and therefore, though here God many times spares particular offenders, there being a future state in which he can reckon with them, and call them to a strict account for all their affronts and provocations; yet it is very rare, if ever, that he suffers wicked nations to go unpunished here;

because if he should, as such they would escape for ever. And how would it weaken the government of the world, if when God sees a people confederate against him, blow the trumpets of rebellion, and gather into armies to urge war against him, he should sit still with his hands in his bosom, and take no notice of it! For though among men the multitude of offenders be many times the cause of their impunity, because of the weakness of human governments, which are glad to spare, where they are not strong enough to punish; yet in the government of God things are quite otherwise: no combination of sinners is too hard for him, and the greater and more numerous the offenders are, the more his justice is concerned to vindicate the affront. However, therefore, God may pass by single sinners in this world; yet when a nation combines against him, *when hand joins in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.*

3. Wickedness tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, as it contributes to the corrupting and infatuating of their counsels. For vice and wickedness doth very much depress the minds and weaken the understandings of men; it doth so warp their judgments, and cast such mists of prejudice around their reason, that they are not able to discern the issues and consequents of things. For when they are overpowered by their lusts, their affections will mislead their minds, and impose upon them for truth and realities their own unreasonable wishes and desires: and when we advise in the midst of a company of headstrong passions and appetites, we are like Rehoboam amongst his young and hairbrained counsellors, who represented things to him, not as they were in

themselves, but according to his own desires and inclinations. And when the counsels of a nation are steered by its own vicious affections, that will most commonly seem best which is most unreasonable; and so storms will many times be mistaken for calms, and rocks for safe and quiet harbours. No man is fit to counsel for a public good, but he that is led by simple and unbiassed reason; because he only will attend impartially to the reasons of things, and accommodate his advices to the public necessities and exigencies of affairs. But when the man himself is governed by an unreasonable appetite or affection, that will ever and anon intermingle with his judgment and bias his counsels towards its own unreasonable desires and inclinations. And when such blind affections as pride and ambition, covetousness and revenge, sit at the stern, and are the pilots and steermen of a kingdom, how can it be expected but that in the midst of so many rocks and quicksands that surround it, it shall be run a-ground, or be split in pieces?

3. Wickedness tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, as it contributes to melt and emasculate their courage. For though it cannot be denied but that the valour and courage of nations is very much owing to the temper of the climes in which they are situate; yet it is evident, that as people of the most effeminate climes have by virtue been improved into heroic and magnanimous, as the Romans and Persians for instance; so those of the most hardy and courageous climes have many times by their dissolute manners been broken and dispirited into the most wretched cowards and poltrons; as the English for instance; who, though they have been ever remarked

for a people of a daring and undaunted genius, yet have sometimes been so melted by their own softness and luxury, as that they became preys to every dog that hunted them. And indeed softness, luxury, and wantonness, are vices that will effeminate the spirits, and spoil the strain of the most valorous nation: for as virtues are increased by exercise, so they shrink and decay by inactivity; and there is no state of life that doth so fetter our courage and restrain its vigour and activity, as that of idleness and luxury; in which, after it hath stewed and dissolved a while, it will convert into the greatest baseness and pusillanimity: for an intemperate bowl, a bed of sloth, and a Delilah's lap, are charms sufficient to effeminate a hero, and bewitch a lion into a timorous hare. And as these particular vices do naturally discourage a nation, so vice in general hath the same effect; for it naturally impresses a sense of guilt upon the mind, which fills it with such fears and horrors, as cannot but weaken and dispirit the hardiest and most daring courage. For how can a man be courageous that is continually stung with the remorses and haunted with the restless furies of his own guilty mind; that carries a hell within his own bosom, and hath a thousand guilts, like so many grim and ghastly devils, continually staring him in the face? Certainly such an one must either lay by his reason or his courage, and become a coward, or cease to be a man. Hence it is said, *The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth: but the righteous is bold as a lion*, Prov. xxviii. 1. And when a nation is thus dispirited by their own lusts and guilts, then are they ripe for ruin, and fit to be made a prey for every Nimrod that will hunt and invade them.

5. Wickedness tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, as it breaks and dissolves their union. For as true religion knits men's hearts together by the indissoluble ligaments of mutual love and charity; as it heals their spirits, and corrects their passions, and inspires their natures with all those obliging graces upon which the peace and concord of society is founded; so, on the contrary, vice and wickedness rends and divides the hearts of men, sows seeds of discord in their natures, frets and inflames their spirits against one another, and impregnates them with such rude and barbarous passions, as do naturally render them unsociable to each other; such as pride and ambition, envy and malice, covetousness and revenge, which naturally tend to the dissolution of society, and the cutting in sunder all the cords of friendship and good neighbourhood. Hence is that of St. James, chap. iv. 1. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* Yea, doubtless, this is the cause of all those discords that spoil the harmony of this moral world, the Pandora's box, out of which have swarmed all those strifes and contentions, broils and confusions, that have destroyed and ruined many flourishing kingdoms. For though the most turbulent factions are usually faced with zeal for God, yet if you look beyond the outside, you will always find that most of the broils that have been conducted under the displayed banners of religion, have been raised and led on by the devilish passions of those who have been the most zealous sticklers and fomenters of them. Thus vice, you see, doth naturally divide the nation, and tears the members of it in sunder: and our

blessed Saviour assures us, that when *a kingdom is divided against itself*, it is soon *brought to desolation*, Matth. xii. 25. For those divisions do mightily impair the strength of a kingdom, which, like an impetuous stream, being parted in several currents, runs with far less force, and is much more easily forded. And when once a nation is torn and separated into factions, it is at best but like a confederate army, which, though it be united into one body, hath several contrary interests and designs, which divides their counsels, and makes them suspicious of one another, and so less able to withstand the force of an united enemy: and in these circumstances what can be expected, but that either they should fall out among themselves, and sheath their swords in one another's bowels, or be made an easy prey to the power and rapine of their common adversary?

6. Wickedness tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, as it disturbs them in their order and regular administration. For as religion lays the foundations of all good order in a kingdom; as it obliges the governors to all those regular virtues that make them public blessings, to justice and liberality, to truth and mercy, to constancy and magnanimity; as it blinds the subordinate instruments and ministers of state to fidelity and diligence; as it engages the subjects to honour and reverence, to obey and submit to their governors: so, on the contrary, vice and wickedness, when it hath insinuated itself into a nation, subverts the whole order of it, and miserably confounds the course of its administration. It introduces into the government opposition and tyranny, fraud and cruelty, cowardice and incon-

stancy; it perverts the ministers of it into traitors and robbers, and turns its courts of justice into dens of thieves; it alienates the subjects from their duty and allegiance, makes them heady and high-minded, rude and pragmatical, factious and ungovernable; and, in a word, spreads such a poisonous contagion over all the vital parts of a nation, as, without a speedy cure, must necessarily end in the ruin and desolation of the whole. For such universal disorders are as the symptoms of death upon a nation; and like those gentler convulsions within the bowels of the earth, do portend the approach of some dreadful earthquake. And as when the whole mass of blood and humours is corrupted, the body is sick unto death, and will putrefy apace into a carcass; thus when a kingdom is thus universally disordered, when, as the prophet expresses it, *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint;* when *from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness in it, but all is covered with wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores,* what can be expected but a speedy and a fatal period?

7. Wickedness tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, as it consumes their wealth and substance. Whilst virtue and religion do bear sway in the nation, to be sure it is of a frugal and industrious genius; the people will attend to their own business, and not be intermeddling pragmatically in another's diocese; they enjoy themselves within the bounds of modesty and sobriety, and make a conscience of outspending their fortunes, and living above their proper ranks and degrees in the world. And whilst every member thus acts within its proper sphere, the nation cannot but thrive and prosper, each one

by his honest frugality and industry being enabled upon all occasions to contribute to the defence and support of the public. But when once vice and wickedness have thrust out virtue, and overspread the nation, it introduces in its room so many costly, chargeable, and prodigal lusts, as will soon exhaust its wealth, and suck the blood out of its veins. Then in comes idleness, and, like a drone, lives upon the acquests of industry: then pride begins to spread her peacock's train, and flaunt out what frugality had saved, in gorgeous apparel and sumptuous furniture. Then drunkenness and gluttony begin to call out for meat and drink-offerings to their god, the belly; and lust and wantonness to crave provisions to feed and pamper their insatiate appetites: in a word, then comes in such a pack of greedy hell-hounds to devour the fruits of our past frugality and industry, as are sufficient to drain and exhaust the Indies. And when there are so many locusts swarming in every corner of the land, what can be expected, but that at last they should eat up every green thing, and devour the fruits of every tree? For we may maintain whole fleets and armies at a cheaper rate than a few extravagant lusts; and let but pride and idleness, intemperance and wantonness, be let loose, and allowed to sponge a while upon a nation, and in a little time they shall more impoverish and consume its substance, than a long and wasting war. And when the wealth of a nation, which is the vital blood that runs and circulates about its veins and arteries, is thus continually sucked by these insatiate *daughters of the horse-leech, that still cry out, Give, give,* its life must necessarily ebb by degrees, and at the last it must faint away and expire.

8. And lastly, Wickedness tends to the ruin of kingdoms and nations, as it impairs and debases their esteem and reputation. *Righteousness exalteth a nation*, saith the Wise Man: *but sin is the reproach of any people*, Prov. xiv. 34. For vice hath such a natural baseness and uncomeliness in it, that whenever it appears in its own colours, it creates a mighty disesteem of itself in the minds of all that behold it; and wherever it goes, it carries an infamous character along with it: it blasts the reputation of its own votaries, covers their heads with shame and dishonour, causes them to rot above ground, and to stink alive; and when they are dead, writes a black and inglorious memory on their graves.

When therefore this foul and noisome leprosy hath spread itself over the face of a nation, it must necessarily render it a horrid and monstrous spectacle unto all that behold it: and though the universality of sin may give it some reputation, where its throne and empire is seated, and render it genteel and fashionable among its own slaves and vassals; yet it is such a reputation as hath no bottom to support it. For unless my honour be founded in some real excellency, it is not in me, but in the conceit of him that honours me: his fancy is the mint where all my reputation is coined; and it is at his pleasure to stamp me an angel or a devil. So that though vice may sometimes be in vogue, where it is universally propagated; yet it being a vogue without foundation, all the credit it gives is only a fantastic being; a thing that is only the sport and dalliance of vulgar breath and popular noise: but whilst its own blind votaries sing hosannas to it, and strew its way with palms, all the world besides exclaim against, and cry unani-

mously, Crucify it, Crucify it. So that while it is honoured at home, it is vilified abroad; and though we may sometimes be so besotted as to reckon it our glory, yet, to be sure, all wise and indifferent judges will upbraid it to us as our shame. For what wicked nation is there that hath ever escaped the reproaches and infamy of mankind, that hath abandoned itself to fraud and treachery, to softness and effeminacy, to oppression and cruelty, and hath not thereupon drawn upon itself the scorn and hissing of all the nations round about it? And when a people are grown cheap and despicable in their neighbours' eyes; when their faith is suspected, their truth branded, and their virtue stained and blemished; what support or friendly intercourse can they expect from them? Who will trust to their leagues or confederacies, or enter into commerce with them, who have neither truth nor justice to secure them? For so much reputation as the nation loses, so much strength it loses: for it is a mighty strength to a people to be feared and loved by their neighbouring nations; neither of which they can expect to be, when once they have sunk their reputation: for who will dread an effeminate people, softened with luxury and voluptuousness? or who will love a profligate people, distained with cruelty and falsehood? And when a people hath not credit enough to make them either feared or loved, if then they are not ruined or destroyed, it is because their enemies either think it not worth the while, or are not at leisure to attempt it.

And thus you see how many ways wickedness contributes to the ruin of a nation. So that when wickedness hath overspread a people, and is become their epidemical disease, it doth not only bode their ap-

proaching fate, but hastens it, and pulls it headlong down upon them; and without a miracle, they must reform, or sink or perish. For unless God alters the natural course of things, and hinders necessary causes from producing their effects, it will be as impossible to hinder the ruin of a kingdom that is overwhelmed with wickedness, and obstinately continues so, as it is to save a house from burning, that is wrapped and compassed about with flames; because the burning of a house is not a more necessary effect of the flames that surround it, than the ruin of a nation is of the sins that overspread it. One way therefore there is left, and only one, for such a nation to save itself, and that is by repentance. Which brings me to the next proposition in the text, That true repentance and amendment is the certain way to prevent that ruin which our iniquities threaten. *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.* But before I enter upon this proposition, I shall draw a few practical inferences from what hath been said.

1. From hence I infer what plagues and nuisances wicked men are to a kingdom, since the tendency of sin in so many particulars is so very destructive to its welfare and interest. These are the grand disturbers of Israel, the wretched incendiaries that set all in flames and combustions about them; their sins are the trains that do give fire to those mines of ruin that sink and tear up kingdoms, and their breasts are the seminaries and harbourers of those traitors that do conspire against, and undermine our peace and happiness. For as for those traitors without, though they were a thousand times, if possible, more crafty, and restless, and malicious than they are, we might

defy their hellish plots and intrigues, and smile at their vain attempts, did not our sins contribute to make us miserable: but when we by our own wickedness will join hands with their restless craft and malice, assist them against ourselves, and cooperate with them to our own destruction, what remedy is there for us? When the sins of our friends are conspiring our ruin together with the malice of our enemies, how can we hope either wholly to escape, or much longer to defer it? For if ever that destruction come upon us which hath been so long designing, and is now hanging over us, this epitaph will very well fit our tombs; "Here lies a miserable nation, whose ruin is "owing more to their own sins, than to all the de-"signs and powers of their enemies." Consider this therefore, O you sinners in this our Sion: you are, though you know it not, in a strict confederacy with the priests and Jesuits against your native country, against the protestant religion, and against the liberties and properties of Englishmen: you are accessary to all those treasons which they have contrived and are still contriving against the religion, and laws, and government of the nation: and if ever they thrive and take effect, (which the God of heaven avert!) we may thank you for prospering and succeeding them; who by your pride and sensuality, your fraud and faction, your covetousness and oppression, do what in you lies to ripen and give a prosperous birth to the treasonous designs of our common adversaries. And therefore, if yet you have any regard either for this sinking kingdom, whose womb bore you, or to this bleeding church, whose paps gave you suck, (both which, in the most sorrowful postures that a church and kingdom can be well

reduced to, are now crying out unto you, "O you, "our cruel and unnatural children, have pity upon "us! have pity upon us!") if, I say, you have any regard either for the one or the other, O be now at last persuaded to commiserate their deplorable condition, to take off those loud-mouthed sins you have set upon them, and are now, like a pack of hounds, tearing and worrying them in pieces.

2. From hence I infer what is the true cause of those many national evils which we feel and justly fear. For since iniquity doth so directly tend to the ruin of a nation, to what other cause may we more truly attribute either those present or those future evils, that have or shall befall us? When any calamity befalls us, we are apt to ascribe it all, either to false, or else to partial causes; and if we reckon sin among the causes, to be sure, we skip and overlook our own. It is the carelessness or ill design of this or the other minister of state, cries one; it is the peevishness and faction of such a gang and party, cries another; it is the rigour and severity of those who comply with, and contend for the legal establishment, cries a third: when these at most are but a partial cause, and the main spring, God knows, of all our mischiefs lies within our own bosoms. And though many of us are sensible, as we cannot well be otherwise, that sin hath a great hand in all our sufferings and calamities; yet, alas! how few are there that reckon their own sins into the tale. They are the sins of the court, cries the city; and the sins of the city, cries the country; they are the sins of the church, cries the separatist; and the sins of the clergy, cries the laity; and the sins of the gentry, cries the commonalty. Thus every one washes his

own hands; and like the whore in the Proverbs, *wipes his mouth, and cries, I have done no wickedness:* so that, though none are guiltless, and every one stands accused by his antagonist; yet, if all may be believed, none are guilty: and so the judgments of God are posted from tithing to tithing, from one party of men to another, and nobody will own them, though they call us all *father;* which is just as if a company of people in a dreadful conflagration should fall a contending with one another at whose house the fire began, and in the mean time permit it quietly to burn on, till it had consumed all before it. Whereas if we would put a stop to the judgments that begin to flame about our ears, we should every one reflect upon ourselves, and bring our buckets of penitential tears to extinguish that part of them which our own sins have kindled: and if we would but do thus, if every man would smite upon his own thigh, and cry, Lord, what have I done? then we might hope to see the growing flame put out and quenched, that now waves its curled head, and threatens universal ruin: but till once we are brought to a sorrowful sense of our own sins, and of the share they contribute to the public mischiefs, we are not so much as in the way of recovery. For since the cause of the kingdom's sickness lies, God knows, in all our breasts, how is it possible we should conspire to remove the whole, till we are every man sensible of his own part? Let us therefore search and examine our own hearts, what we have contributed to the public disease, and every one purge out his own particular share of it; and then to be sure all will soon be well again, and this poor kingdom, that hath so many years been languishing under the sins of its natives, and is now re-

duced almost to its last gasp, will yet recover, and once more flourish in perfect health and vigour.

3. From hence I infer what is the just character of those men who by their principles and practices contribute to the ruin of kingdoms. For since iniquity so directly tends to a public ruin, we may be sure that those principles and practices that naturally tend to the same end are principles and practices of iniquity; and yet, good God! how many such are there, that under the fair disguises of Christian doctrines and godly zeal, and with their demure looks and religious countenances, do many times seduce and cajole weak and well-disposed minds into such seditious gangs, mutinous practices, and treasonous conspiracies, as do too often end either in their own ruin or their native country's. Thus in the church of Rome, what horrid and barbarous practices have there been occasioned by those antichristian doctrines of the lawfulness of destroying heretics, deposing and murdering of kings! How many kings and emperors have there been excommunicated, butchered, and destroyed by them! How many flourishing kingdoms have there been depopulated, wasted, and imbrued in blood by them! How many millions of men, women, and children, have there been sacrificed to the demands of these inhuman and bloodthirsty principles! Insomuch that it may be justly questioned, whether for six hundred years together these pretences of Christianity did not destroy more lives than Christianity itself hath saved souls. And would to God that these destroying principles had been for ever confined within the pale of that degenerate church! Then might our reformation have boldly challenged to itself the spirit of

peace and meekness, of unbounded charity, unstained loyalty, and firm allegiance; and, without a blush in its face, have upbraided that mother of harlots with being the only patroness of treasons, and rebellions, and confusion. But, alas! those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, and have sown their mischievous principles in our fruitful fields, where they have sprung up many an ill weed; and these, God knows, have grown apace. For not to touch upon the old sores, which for our own credit's sake and our religion's, O would to God were lost in perpetual oblivion! how many are there this day among us, that, out of a pretence of zeal for God and religion, make it their business to divide and tear, rend and distract the kingdom! who by starting jealousies and ill surmises, fetching and carrying tales and scandalous reports against the government, suggesting miscarriages of state that never were, and blackening and aggravating those that are, do what in them lies to blow up the discontents of the kingdom into an intestine flame; and, whilst the common enemy is boring a hole in the bottom of the ship, do set the mariners together by the ears, that so while they are scuffling within, they may neglect the danger from without, till one common ruin involves them all, and sinks them together with their swords in one another's bowels. And though it is notorious to all the world, what a mighty bulwark this church hath always been to the reformed religion, how much it hath been the dread and envy of Rome, and the mark of her power and malice; how all her agents have constantly conspired to fight neither against small nor great, but against the church of England, in hope that if once this

master-fort were dismantled, they should quickly force the lesser garrisons and citadels to surrender; yet how many parties have we among ourselves, who yet pretend great zeal for the reformation, that industriously set themselves to batter down its sanctuary about its ears; that join their throats in one common cry with the priests and Jesuits, "Down "with her, down with her even to the ground;" and all this to gratify their prejudice against a few innocent and indifferent rites, which as private communicants they are very little if at all concerned in. I do not charge these men with a popish design, though I am sure they charge us with it upon far less reason: but this I say, and will maintain it, that whilst they thus industriously set themselves to tear open the wounds of our church, and widen them into incurable schisms, they take a most effectual course to open the gap for popery which stands at the door, and only waits till the breach is wide enough for it to enter.

To conclude all therefore; seeing it is the sin and wickedness of people and nations that is the main spring of their ruin and destruction, let us, as we would escape that dismal ruin which for several years hath hung over our heads, and hath been pouring itself upon the heads of several neighbouring countries and nations, betake ourselves to a deep humiliation for, and hearty repentance of our sins, which threaten us more than all the powers of our most powerful enemies. We are now engaged in a war against a great prince, who hath not only, by a most savage and barbarous persecution of his own subjects, proclaimed himself a mortal enemy to our religion, but also, by his perfidious violations of the

law of nations, his infractions of the most sacred ties and obligations, and his unparalleled cruelties towards all that have fallen within the reach of his power, hath rendered himself the common enemy of mankind, and seems to have been raised up on purpose by God to be a plague and scourge of a wicked world; his power having for several years hung over all Christendom like a dismal cloud charged with thunder and lightning, and having discharged itself upon several countries and nations in such prodigious showers of blood, and tempests of ruin and devastation, as scarce any history can parallel: against this mischievous power, that glories in nothing but outrage, and triumphs upon the ruins of mankind, we are now engaged, in conjunction with almost all the Christian world, in a common defence, there being no remedy left us, but either to repel and vanquish it, or to lie at its feet, and tamely submit ourselves to be trampled into destruction by it: nor is there any nation under the cope of heaven that hath greater advantages of curbing it in its career than our own, if our own sins and intestine divisions do not spoil all. Wherefore, as we hope to succeed in this our necessary defence of our religion and our native country, let us every one in our places endeavour, by laying aside all our malice and revenge, our pride and faction, to cement those unhappy breaches that are among ourselves, and all betake ourselves to a serious and hearty repentance for our own sins, that thereby we may reconcile ourselves to God, and engage his almighty power to fight for us.

And thus I have done with the first proposition contained in these words, *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity*

shall not be your ruin, That the iniquity of a people or nation tends directly to their ruin: and shall now proceed to the second; viz.

That true repentance and amendment is the most effectual way to prevent that ruin which our iniquities do so naturally bring upon us.

This it is upon a twofold influence it hath:

1. Upon God.

2. Upon ourselves.

1. It hath a powerful influence upon God, who is the sovereign arbitrator of the fate of nations, and doth dispose of their ruin and happiness as he pleases. For he being the sovereign Lord of the world, and supreme moderator of issues and events, there is no particular kingdom or nation that is exempt from his jurisdiction and disposal; and it is in his power alone to determine of every one of them whether they shall be happy or miserable. *It is the Lord that killeth, and that maketh alive: that bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord that maketh poor, and maketh rich: that bringeth low, and lifteth up*, 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7. And as he thus disposes of the fate of particular persons, so he doth much more of the fate of particular nations; *for it is he that increases the nations, and destroyeth them: he that enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them*, Job xii. 23. And Dan. iv. 17. it is said, that *the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.* And in 2 Kings xix. 15. Hezekiah thus addresses to him, *Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth.* And if the government and disposal of nations be in God's hand, as you see it is, then whatsoever hath an influence upon God, to oblige and en-

dear him to a nation, must needs effectually conduce to its recovery and welfare; because it makes him its friend, who alone can make it happy and miserable: and that which endears God to us, who alone hath power to rescue and recover us, must need effectually conduce to our recovery. Now that repentance hath such an influence upon God will evidently appear, whether we consider it,

1. As an act of natural justice and rectitude; or,

2. As the primary end and design of punishment; or,

3. As the best reparation we can make him for our rebellions against him; or,

4. As the condition upon which he hath voluntarily obliged himself to be reconciled unto us.

1. Consider it as an act of natural justice and rectitude; and as such it must needs have a powerful influence upon God: for justice or rectitude of choice and action are everlastingly founded in the nature of God, to whom it is as natural to govern himself and all his actions by the best and purest reason, as it is to exist or live. So that whatsoever hath natural rectitude in it, and is squared and regulated by right reason, must needs be harmonious to the nature of God, and consequently doth as naturally please and gratify him, as a musical note doth a musical ear: for every nature hath a delightful gust and relish of that which is agreeable to itself; and therefore since it is natural to God himself to act according to the eternal reasons of things, to see others act so too must needs be grateful to his nature; but to repent is the most reasonable action that sinful creatures can perform. For if it be best and most reasonable not to do amiss at all, then

doubtless, when we do amiss, the next most reasonable is to resolve to do so no more; there being the same reason why he that hath sinned should sin no more, as why he that hath not, should not sin at all. And therefore I cannot but wonder at the wild assertion of some of our philosophical sinners, that to repent is an argument of meanness of spirit, and discovers in us a weak and irresolute mind; as if, because I have played the fool, I must resolve to be a fool for ever, for fear of being accounted weak and irresolute; as if to change a mean and base resolution were a piece of meanness and baseness. Indeed to enter into base resolutions argues a base or inconsiderate spirit; but to revoke them is so far from being base or mean, that it is highly rational and generous; there being the same reason for the revoking a bad resolution, as there is against the making it; and next to not yielding to an unreasonable motion, the highest bravery in a reasonable nature is not to persist in it. For if we are reasonable beings, our strength and bravery must consist in being constant to our reason; but to be constant against it, is to be constant fools or constant knaves, or both: and if this be the character of a bravely resolute mind, much good may it do those heroic sinners that count it a reproach to repent. For the main of repentance consists in the changing of unreasonable resolutions, than which no change can be more agreeable to the eternal laws of reason: and these laws being founded in the nature of God, this change must be infinitely agreeable to him, and have a most powerful influence upon him. For since to repent is the most reasonable action that a sinner can do, by what can we sinful creatures more effectually endear ourselves to God;

who being most reasonable himself, must needs be affected with that which is most reasonable in us.

2. Consider repentance as the primary end and design of punishment; and as such it must needs have a powerful influence upon God. For there being no such thing as a blind unreasonable vengeance in the nature of God, he cannot be supposed to punish for punishment sake; since that would be to inflict misery on others merely to sport and recreate his own revenge; that being the only passion in nature which a pure mischief can gratify or please. Since therefore there is no such affection in the nature of God, we may be sure he doth not punish to please himself, but to reform and amend his criminal creatures; and that it is for the good that punishment doth us, and not for any good that it doth him, that he chooses and inflicts it upon us: for he needs not our misery to make him happy; being most completely happy already in the immense perfection of his own nature: and it is nothing but the want of happiness in itself that makes any being desire or design another's misery. Since therefore God cannot be supposed to design our punishment under the notion of a pure misery, it hence necessarily follows, that if he designs any thing, as to be sure he doth, it must be to do others good by it; and consequently, that since it is for the sake of this good that he inflicts it, he will most readily dispense with it, if that be but answered and obtained without it. But now our repentance doth in a great measure answer and supply the end of our punishment; which is either to reform us when we have done amiss, or to warn others by our example not to tread in our footsteps; both which ends are in an

high degree obtained in our unfeigned repentance. For if we heartily repent of our past iniquities, we shall be sure to amend them for the future: and it is impossible that repentance should be true, which doth not upon the first opportunity commence into an actual reformation: and so, if it be true also, it will render us exemplary warnings unto others; for it will inflict upon us such bitter sorrows, such deep remorses, and stinging reflections, as will render us almost as great and eminent examples of the evil and folly of our sins, as the punishments that were intended against them: and those of our brethren in iniquity that will take no warning by us, when they see the throbs and agonies of our repentance, how it pierces, wounds, and mortifies our souls; in all probability would be as little affected, should they, instead of that, see the hand of God upon us, chastening and correcting us for our follies. For he that heartily repents makes almost as woful an experiment of the folly and evil of his sin, as he that hath felt the punishment of it: and next to a bleeding punished criminal, there is no such example of the madness of sin, as a weeping, merciful, and dejected penitent. Since therefore in both these respects repentance doth so effectually supply the designs of our punishment, we may be sure the merciful God, who doth always punish in order to those designs, will be very much influenced by it. For every agent is satisfied when it hath its end; and therefore since our repentance will supply those ends which God designed in our punishment, we may be sure it will highly please and gratify him: for in our repentance he hath what he aimed at, when he designed to punish us; and to be sure, a

good God will never be so fond of the miseries of his creatures, as to punish them to no purpose.

3. Consider repentance as the best reparation we can make for our past sins and rebellions; and as such also it must needs have a mighty influence upon God. It is true, for sinners to make a full reparation to God for the affronts and dishonours they have cast upon him, is impossible; because what they have done they can no more undo, than make what is past never to have been. But yet, he that heartily repents of his former sins, forasmuch as he hates and laments them, and wishes from his soul that he had never done them, doth hereby morally cancel and revoke them: for this universal act of nolition extending to all his past bad choices, though it cannot so undo as to cause them not to have been; yet it doth so unwill and unchoose them, as if they were not they should never be. It is true, God being our supreme Lord and lawgiver, the only complete satisfaction we can personally render him is perfect unsinning obedience, (as all good and virtuous ones are,) God hath the same right to it, as he had to that wherein we failed; and it is impossible that by satisfying one debt, we should make a full repayment of another. But of all our after-reparations, there is none approaches so near to innocence and unsinning obedience, as this of unfeigned repentance: for all the difference between an innocent person and a true penitent is only this, that the former never chose to sin, and the latter hath unchosen all his sinful choices; the one did not sin when it was in his power to do it, the other would not have sinned if it were in his power not to do it. So that though repentance is by no means equivalent to innocence,

yet because of all the after-acts of a nocent person, it makes the nearest approach to it, it necessarily follows, that it is the best and highest reparation that any sinful creature can make to an offended God. What better reparation can I make for the delight and pleasure I have taken in offending him, than to submit myself to the pains and anguish of a bitter and severe repentance for it? How can I more effectually repair the many dishonours I have done him by my base and impious actions, the shameless affronts I have put upon him, than by laying my stubborn will at his feet, putting on shame and confusion of face, and abhorring myself in dust and ashes before him. This being therefore the best satisfaction that such a sinful people as we are can make to our offended but most merciful God, we may justly hope, that if we render him this, it will have an auspicious influence upon him to incline him towards us, and avert his just displeasure from us. When he shall see us prostrate at his feet, acknowledging with sorrowful hearts the infinite injuries we have done him, offering him all the poor amends we can make him, and grieving that we can offer him no more; such a moving spectacle cannot but kindle in him a relenting towards us, and cause his propitious bowels to resound with echoes of mercy.

4. And lastly, Consider repentance as the condition upon which God hath voluntarily engaged himself to be reconciled unto us; and as such also it must needs have a powerful influence upon him. So in the text, you see, he hath obliged himself, upon the repentance of wicked people, to interpose between their sin and ruin. So also Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10, 11.

you have an excellent account of God's readiness to relieve a repenting people: *In their adversity, if they be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction; then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions wherein they have exceeded. He openeth also their ears to discipline, and commandeth that they return from their iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure.* But this, perhaps you will say, is only a relation of what God usually doth, and not a promise by which he obliges himself always to do so well: but it supposes such a promise on God's part, else there could have been no sure foundation for Elihu to have promised it. But then, Isaiah i. 16, 17, 18. you have God's own word for it: *Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well.—Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.* So also Hosea xiv. 1, 2, 4. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render thee the calves of our lips.* To which in the 4th verse God returns this answer of mercy; *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as a lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* But these promises, perhaps you will say, respect Israel only,

and consequently ought not to be extended unto other nations. Well then, let us see, in the last place, what he hath said to nations in general, Jer. xviii. 7, 8. *At what time I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* So that what he had promised before to Israel his people, here extends to all nations; viz. that upon their repentance he will be favourable to them, and repent of the evil he intended against them: which gives us as great a certainty of the good influence of our repentance upon him, as we can have of his eternal truth, which is the foundation of all certainty. So that if to have God for our friend can contribute any thing to the saving us from an impending ruin, then must our repentance, which makes him our friend, be so far the means of our salvation.

2. As repentance hath a great influence upon God, to move and incline him to rescue us from ruin, so it hath also a mighty influence upon us towards the preventing and obviating our ruin: so that though there were no such thing as a God for it to work upon, and engage in our defence and protection; or though that God should wholly withdraw himself from action, and absolutely refuse to intermeddle in our affairs; yet would our repentance itself, by its own natural and necessary influence, most effectually operate towards the prevention of that public ruin; and that these four ways:

1. As it will throughly awaken us into a due sense of our danger.

2. As it will animate and encourage us with the hope of success upon the use of due and proper means.

3. As it will take us off from those mischievous actions which do so necessarily contribute to our ruin.

4. As it will put us upon such a regular course of action, as doth naturally tend to the public good. In all which respects, I shall shew you, it would be an effectual means of our recovery.

1. True repentance naturally awakens us into a due and serious sense of our danger. For a vicious life doth naturally lull men into a sottish and senseless security: it makes them stupid and reckless, and bereaves them of their natural foresight and sagacity: for besides that it takes off their minds from the exercise of reason, and infatuates them with weak and fantastic prejudices, it renders them so soft and indulgent to their own luxurious and effeminate genius, that they cannot endure any sad or serious thoughts should intermingle with their jovial airs. So that if danger stands at any distance from them, they wilfully wink at it, and are afraid to look it in the face, lest it should suggest such thoughts to them as would disturb the scenes of their mirth, and dash their draughts of sinful pleasures with wormwood. Hence, Amos vi. 1, 3. it is made the character of the wicked Israelites, that lived at ease in Zion, *that they put far from them the evil day;* that is, they would not entertain a thought of the nearness of their danger, lest it should prove a thorn in their pillows, and disturb their soft and beloved ease. So also Hosea vii. 9. *Strangers have devoured his strength,* (saith he, speaking of that wicked people,) *and he knoweth it*

not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he perceiveth it not: that is, though they were exceedingly wasted already, and had all the symptoms of an approaching ruin upon them; yet they were so intent upon their lusts, and so besotted by them, that they took no notice of it. And if men will be so stupid as to neglect their danger, and never think of retreating, till they have run themselves into the jaws of it, what remedy is there for them? How can they escape, that will sleep on securely upon the brinks of a precipice, and will not regard their danger, till they are dropping headlong into it, and are fallen beyond prevention or recovery? But when once men betake themselves to a course of serious repentance, they will soon recover out of this their lethargic temper. For repentance will not only chase away all those effeminate lusts which barred their understanding against all apprehensions of danger, and rendered them so supine and regardless; but it will make them deeply sensible of the desert of their sin, and what fearful effects are to be expected from it: so that now they will be so far from thrusting from them the thoughts of their danger, that they will reckon it among the numberless miracles of God's goodness, that they are not long ago swallowed up and consumed by it: and besides those visible dangers that attend them in the common course of things, they will discern a black cloud arising out of their own guilts, and gathering into storms of vengeance, and look upon their past wickedness as the dire omens of an approaching judgment: and being thus awakened into a sense of the danger that threatens them, they are so far on their way towards an happy recovery.

2. True repentance will also animate and encourage a people with the hope of success upon the use of due and proper means. It is the natural property of a wicked life to render men secure, when danger is at a distance, and desperate, when it is near at hand: when it is remote, they are afraid to mind it, lest it should interrupt their pleasures, and mingle discords with their harmony; but when, by reason of their fear, they are forced to mind it, the sudden unexpected alarm it gives them raises such an uproar in their thoughts, that they can neither find nor force an escape from it. For the opposite affections of human nature succeed one another in the same degree. Thus, when we hate those whom we loved, we usually hate them in the same degree that we loved them; and when two contrary passions follow one another, they are generally both extreme; and by how much the foregoer exceeded the just medium of one way, by so much will the follower exceed the other; just like the vibrations of a pendulum, the which the farther you swing it this way, the farther it will return the other; and consequently, the more we exceed in security whilst danger is pursuing us, the more we shall exceed in fear when it hath overtaken us. So that when, out of an extravagant indulgence to their sinful pleasures, men shut their eyes against approaching danger, and will not open them till it is just upon them, and stares them in the face, the ghastly and surprising spectacle will presently transport them out of one extreme into another, out of a deep security into a dead despair; especially, considering how naturally the sense of danger awakens in guilty minds their natural dread of God, and fills them with fearful expectations from him: and when

a man awakes upon the brinks of a precipice, and all on a sudden sees an apparent destruction before him, and by his sight is at the same time roused into a dismal apprehension of an almighty vengeance behind him, stretching forth its arm to thrust him headlong down; how must it needs appal and astonish him, and disarm him of all hope and power of escaping? So that out of a secure impenitence, you see there is but one remove into an heartless desperation: and when men are desperate in the midst of danger, and are reduced to their wit's end; when they have neither prudence to forecast, nor courage to execute any method of recovery without a miracle, their ruin is unavoidable. Of this you have an eminent example in the wicked Israelites, who, when their danger was afar off, were most unreasonably secure and regardless of it; but when Sennacherib's army had invested their city, and they saw themselves surrounded with ruin on every side, then their security immediately converts into the most frightful and horrid apprehensions: for so the prophet describes it, Isaiah xxxiii. 14. *The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who amongst us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* Whilst the power of that haughty monarch was at a distance from them, they laughed at and despised it; but now it is at their doors, they are so frightened at it, that they had no softer words to express it by, than *devouring fire*, and *everlasting burnings:* so that if God had not rescued them by a miracle, their unmanly fears had so disarmed them, that they would have never been able to defend themselves: but now by our repentance we do most

certainly prevent being reduced to this woful extremity: for that will open our eyes to all approaching dangers, and remove those effeminate lusts out of our way, which interrupted our prospect of them; so that we shall see them afar off, and having a free sight and expectance of them, shall not be surprised by them when they draw nearer, and are ready to fasten upon us: by which means we shall have time to arm and fortify ourselves against them, and to prepare to receive them with courage and conduct. And when they are come, our repentance will also animate us with the hopes of a timely relief and succour from above, and encourage us to hold out to the last extremity, in expectance of God's appearing in the mount, and a timely interposure between us and ruin. For this being the condition upon which God hath promised us his favour and friendship, there is no reason why we should be desperate, so long as we live in the performance of it. So that the sense of our unfeigned repentance will inspire us with a joyful hope that God is for us: and what danger can dishearten us under this glorious hope, that infinite wisdom and power is on our side?

3. True repentance doth also abolish those mischievous actions which do naturally contribute to the ruin of a people. How much a wicked course of life tends to a nation's ruin, is notorious enough to any man that hath been an observer of the effects and consequences of human actions; how it infatuates their counsels, weakens their courage, rends their unity and concord; how it disorders them in all their natural respects and dependencies, consumes their wealth, and prostitutes their reputation; and how by all these mischievous effects it gradually wastes

and consumes them, and lays the foundation of their inevitable ruin. So that whilst vice and wickedness prevail in a nation, it is like a lingering consumption in our bodies, that soothes us into an opinion that we are well and in health, or flatters us with fair hopes of recovery; but in the mean time is undermining the fort of our life, and preying upon our vitals. But it is the most wretched piece of deceit in the world, for a nation to think itself well while it is wicked: for so many vices as it hath growing in it, so many diseases it hath engendering in its bowels; which, though it may struggle with a while by the natural strength and vigour of its constitution, will by degrees inevitably weaken it, and without a speedy and effectual purgation, finally consume and destroy it: and if it were the best constituted nation in the world, it would be impossible for it not to decay and languish under the malighant influence of an epidemical wickedness. That therefore which purges away this corrupt humour out of which all national diseases spring, must needs be the most effectual means of a dying nation's recovery; and that, and that only, is repentance; one essential part whereof consists in putting off the body of sin, ceasing to do evil, and denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts. And if once this bad cause were removed, all the mischievous effects of it would immediately cease, and thereupon the sick and declining kingdom, that groans and languishes under them, would immediately mend, and in a little time recover its native health and vigour. For what should hinder it from growing well, when the malignant cause of all its distempers is removed? when that which befools its counsels, dissolves its courage, disorders its harmony, breaks its unity, lavishes

out its wealth and reputation, is utterly abolished! What should hinder it from growing up again into a wise and valiant, an orderly and unanimous, a wealthy and renowned nation?

4. And lastly, True repentance doth also put us upon such a course of action as doth naturally tend to the public good. For repentance doth not only consist in ceasing to do evil, but in learning to do well; in putting on the new man, as well as putting off the old; that is, it is an entire submission of our souls to God, to do what he commands, as well as to forbear what he forbids; and the matter of his commands is such as all of it tends to the public good: and if the several ranks and orders of men whereof a nation is composed would but unanimously conspire in that course of action which God hath enjoined, it would doubtless more contribute to the weal and prosperity of such a nation, than the wisest counsels or most puissant forces without it. If those that sit at the helm would but once resolve to steer by those excellent rules of honest prudence, impartial justice, discreet mercy, wise liberality, advised constancy and magnanimity; it would doubtless render their government far more safe and easy, more useful and prosperous, than all the crafty tricks, dark intrigues, and wilely subterfuges of wicked policy; which, instead of promoting the government, do generally lead it into a perplexed maze, and leave it there miserably bewildered and entangled. Again, if those that are subjects would but learn to govern themselves by those laws of candour and modesty, of meekness and fidelity, of submission and loyalty, which God hath enjoined them; with what peace and quiet, safety and contentment, might they enjoy

themselves under the shadow of government! In a word, if the rich would be but as courteous and charitable, the poor as thankful and industrious, and all as just and honest, as kind and gentle, as ready to assist, forbear, and forgive one another, as God requires, what a most glorious and happy society would there spring out of such a regular course of action! Doubtless, for peace and contentment, for bliss and happiness, next to heaven itself, there is no place comparable to a virtuous nation: and were I in quest of a terrestrial paradise, I should sooner expect it in a barren wilderness, inhabited with a virtuous people, than in the most fruitful and delicious Canaan, peopled with wicked and degenerous natives. Since therefore a virtuous course of action hath so direct a tendency to the public good, it hence necessarily follows, that repentance, which is the entrance and introduction to it, must needs very much contribute to the safety and recovery of a nation; because it puts the several parts of it into such a course of life and conversation, as mutually conduces to the peace, and happiness, and preservation of the whole: so that whether we consider the powerful influence it hath upon God, or the good effect it hath upon us, you see it is a most efficacious instrument of public happiness and salvation. Wherefore if the consideration of our own private interest and everlasting fate in another world be not sufficient to move us to a serious repentance, let us add to this the consideration of our temporal concerns, which are involved in the fate of the nation. For the public good is a common bank in which every member hath a share; and consequently, whatsoever damage that suffers, we must expect to bear our part of it. And

yet, God help us! if we impartially view the designs and behaviour of the generality, we would hardly think that they did seriously believe there were any such thing as a commonweal among us, every one almost endeavouring to advance his own interest, though it be upon the public ruin; and all our pretences to the public being little else but a contracting of parties, running a tilt at one another; whilst the common good lies between them, and is equally trampled on by both sides. Wherefore, as we would not betray our common interest, and bury ourselves in the public ruin, let us be persuaded to consider our ways before it be too late, and turn to the Lord by a deep and hearty repentance. And to move you hereunto, I shall desire you to consider these few things.

1. What imminent danger we are in.

2. How much we have all contributed to it.

3. How possible it is to prevent it by our timely repentance.

4. How much our personal repentance will avail us, though we should not prevent it.

5. How dearly we shall repent, when it is too late, if we do not endeavour the prevention of it by repenting now.

1. Consider the imminent danger we are in. For if we consider our present circumstances, how many visible causes there are conspiring to effect our ruin; how we lie open to the common adversary, that doth so vigorously pursue our destruction, and, like an unwalled vineyard, are surrounded with wild boars, and overrun with little foxes within; which, though they are of different kinds, agree in the same ends, and concur to waste and to destroy: how, whilst these

little foxes are pulling down the vine above, the wild boars are waiting underneath, to seize and to devour both; how the restless and indefatigable malice of our Romish adversaries without, is assisted with the furious zeal of our hairbrained factions within; who, though they cannot be insensible how much their divisions weaken and expose us, yet seem resolved rather to venture all, than not to be uppermost; how our counsels are puzzled and entangled, and our procedures clogged and encumbered; how our choices are poised and suspended between contrary evils, that seem so equally great, that we can hardly determine which is the least: in a word, how our mischiefs are chained and linked to one another, so that we cannot remove one, without drawing on another in the room of it; and the suspicion of future, makes us afraid of present mischiefs: if, I say, we consider all these things, we cannot but be sensible how great and near our danger is, and how earnestly it calls upon us for a speedy and effectual remedy.

And when we are encompassed with so many dangers on every side, is it not prodigious sottishness for us to stand gazing on them with our hands in our bosoms, making speeches about them, and telling frightful stories of them to one another; whilst, like a spreading gangrene, they are growing upon us, and creeping insensibly to our hearts, whilst the proper remedy of them is in our own hands, and by a timely application we may quickly cure and prevent them? When we see ourselves upon the borders of ruin, is it a time to stand chattering at the wind, spending our breath in fruitless complaints, impotent invectives, and factious murmurings? When if, in-

stead of finding fault with our superiors, arraigning the government, and quarrelling at the public management and conduct, we would at least resolve to find fault with ourselves, arraign our own vices at the bar of an impartial conscience, and make a thorough inquisition into the ill conduct of our own lives and manners, we might cure the evils, and prevent the dangers which we talk and complain of to no purpose. Certainly, if ever dangers called for a speedy repentance, ours do: but if we will be deaf to their cries, we desperately abandon ourselves to the dismal and pitiful desert of our own folly and madness.

2. Consider how much we have all contributed to the dangers that are pressing upon us. I doubt, if we impartially survey ourselves, and take a severe account of our own doings, there be very few, if any, that will be able to acquit themselves of having some hand in those public mischiefs that hang over us; that in all particulars have behaved themselves so soberly and circumspectly, as to contribute nothing towards the filling up the kingdom's iniquities. Though many of us indeed have not been carried away with the impetuous current of open profaneness and debauchery; yet perhaps we have suffered ourselves to be borne down with the contrary stream of faction, schism, or demure hypocrisy: by which we have not only scandalized our religion, and weakened the interest of it, embroiled our government, and disturbed the methods of our happiness, but also highly incensed the God of peace, and truth, and order. And though others of us have neither been profane nor factious; yet, it may be, we have been remiss and lukewarm in religion, or extremely unfruitful under

those rich manurings and growing showers which it continually affords us: by which we have mightily provoked our God to remove our candlestick, and leave us in the dark; to cut us down, like fruitless trees that are good for nothing but only to burden and cumber the ground. And if one way or the other we have contributed to those public calamities that threaten us, we have no other way to repair the injury we have done our country, but by our timely and serious repentance; this is the only balsam by which we can hope to heal those wounds we have given her: and if when we have wounded we refuse to cure her, though the means are in our own hands, we are doubly guilty of her blood, and shall be doubly charged with it, whenever an inquisition is made for it. So that repentance is a debt we owe the nation for the mischiefs which our sins have done to it, and which we can no otherwise repair, but by repenting of those sins before it is too late; lest we leave such a reckoning behind us as will ruin the kingdom, and undo succeeding generations to discharge it.

3. Consider how possible it is yet to prevent our danger by a timely repentance. Though our condition be full of hazard, yet, God be praised, it is not altogether desperate: though we are *inter pontem et fontem*, descending between the bridge and river, yet there are a thousand accidents may intervene and catch us in our fall, and set us safe on shore again: and that almighty Providence, which orders and disposes the issues and events of things, hath infinite ways which we foresee not, to change the confused scene of our affairs, and reduce our chaos into order. And how willing and ready he is to do

it, is visible enough by his longsuffering towards us, and his patient endurance of our provocations, in expectation that at length his goodness may lead us to repentance. How careful and industrious hath he been to discover danger to us! to draw the curtain from before the dark designs of our enemies, and to unmask their intended mischiefs, in despite of all their arts of concealment! And considering through how many difficulties the providence of God hath pressed in carrying on the happy discovery, how strangely he hath forced it on, and scattered the clouds before it, we have abundant reason to acknowledge his readiness to succour and relieve us, to prevent our being surprised with an unexpected ruin, and swallowed up by it before we were aware. For what should his aim be in shewing us our danger, but only to awake us to repentance; that so, by that powerful motive, he might be induced to rescue and deliver us? Why should he warn us so long beforehand of the blow that is falling upon us, but only to give us space and opportunity to prevent it by our timely repentance? So that ever since the discovery of our danger, deliverance hath been waiting upon us, expecting that happy moment when we would open the door of our repentance to it, and invite it in, and make it welcome. But hitherto, alas! we have shut the door against it, and made it wait in vain: for several months the willing child hath been struggling for birth in the womb of providence, and yet it is unborn; and still it struggles, but all in vain, for want of our repentance to open the womb to it, and promote its travail to a happy birth. And do we yet stand still as persons unconcerned, when ours, our country's, and our children's

fate depends upon the issue of it? When we may yet be safe, if by abandoning our wickedness we will but assist to our deliverance, shall we stand looking on with our hands in our bosoms, and see it stifled in the womb?

4. Consider how much our personal repentance will avail us, though we should not prevent our present danger by it. For I know it will be objected, To what purpose should we repent, if others still go on in their wickedness? Can it be hoped that our personal amendment should have such a mighty influence, as to disperse that mighty cloud of judgments that hangs over the whole nation? To which, in the first place, I answer, that perhaps it may. It may be there is not yet a sufficient number of righteous persons among us to move the holy God to be propitious to this sinful nation: and if for the sake of five righteous persons God would have saved a Sodom; why may not you hope, that by adding yourselves to the far greater number of righteous persons among us, you may yet prevail with God to save the whole nation? and for the possible hope of being saviours to our native country, who would not make such a cheap and easy experiment? But suppose it should not produce this happy effect; that, notwithstanding our personal repentance, the cloud should break, and discharge a bloody storm upon the kingdom; yet, I dare secure you, you shall never have cause to repent of your repentance: for God will either call you into his chambers, shut his door upon you, and hide you for a little moment, till the indignation is overpast, or he will turn it into such an inestimable blessing, that you shall be sure to reap from it unspeakably more good than preju-

dice: and whilst impenitent wretches shall be lashed at the same time both by God and their own consciences, whilst they shall be surrounded with darkness and horror on every side, and not be able to discover any glimpse of day, either within, or without, or above them; whilst heaven and earth, and their own consciences, are storming together about their ears, so that which way soever they turn themselves they are miserable: whilst God disowns them, their own consciences reproach them, and the world will no longer help and succour them; you, being reconciled by your repentance, both to your God and your conscience, will have a safe retreat within your own bosoms, whereinto you may retire, and be merry in spite of fortune; and being there entertained with the ravishing sense of your Father's love, with the soft harmonies of a quiet conscience, and the glorious hopes of a blessed immortality hereafter, you will not only be enabled to support your share of the public calamity, but also to rejoice and triumph over it: so that would you be but persuaded to repent, I durst assure you, you shall find the benefit of it, either in the removal of the judgments you fear, or in the assistance it would give you to undergo them bravely.

5. And lastly, Consider how dearly we shall repent when it is too late, if we do not endeavour to prevent our danger, by repenting now, when we are grovelling under those dreadful judgments that hang lowering over us. When our religion, liberties, and properties are seized, and become a prey to our insulting enemies; when our country is spoiled or imbrued in blood by intestine broils or foreign invasions, and all is involved in ruins and confusions

round about us, then we shall remember, with the tears in our eyes, that we had once an opportunity to be happy; that if we would have been contented to part with a few base lusts, that did unman and prostitute our natures, we might have been still a blessed and prosperous people; that if we would have been so wise as to have sacrificed to God's approaching judgments our sensuality and profaneness, our faction, oppression, and hypocrisy, they would then have fairly retreated, and left us in the quiet enjoyment of all our spiritual and temporal blessings we enjoyed: whereas now, being incensed and drawn on by our desperate obstinacy, they have made a dismal spoil of all, and left us nothing but our sins and guilts to bear us company in our miseries. When we shall see our desolate country, that was heretofore the queen of nations, sitting like a mournful widow in the dust, with her head uncrowned, her garments torn, her breast wounded, and all her parts besmeared with blood; when we shall see our church unpaled, and all her fences trodden down by wild beasts, her beauty defaced, her sun extinguished or overcast with darkness and confusion, how will it cut our hearts to think, that all this is the best product of our own follies, and that if we would have been persuaded betime to abandon our lusts and listen to sober counsels, all these dismal ruins and desolations might have easily been prevented.

O then we shall lament our follies, and wring our woful hands, and wish a thousand and a thousand times, that we had been wiser before it was too late! Seeing therefore it is not yet too late, let us for once resolve to make a trial what good our repentance can do to the public: and O would to God we

would once conspire to make this blessed experiment! And if upon our making it, a cure doth not yet follow; if we do not sensibly perceive our grievances abate, our dangers vanish, our enemies weakened and disheartened, and our broken counsels retrieved and united in the public good, I will be contented to undergo Cassandra's fate, never to be believed in my affirmations more.

For this I am sure of, repentance cannot fail of a good effect; and that, besides all the good it would do us by its own natural and necessary influence, it would reconcile Him to us that hath the disposal of our fate, and then all would go well, and *God, even our own God, would give us his blessing.*

Which he of his infinite mercy grant: to whom, with his eternal Son and Spirit, be ascribed of us and all the world, all honour, and glory, and power, from this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

UPON

MATTHEW III. 8.

Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

THESE words are a part of John Baptist's sermon to the Pharisees and Sadducees, of whom mention is made in the foregoing verse: the first of which being a sort of demure and formal hypocrites, who under religious pretences shrouded the blackest villaines; the second, a company of atheistical debauchees, who, to supersede the troublesome obligations of their consciences, and to obtain of themselves a free dispensation to be wicked, denied the existence of spirits and the life to come. The Baptist, upon their address to be admitted to his baptism, sharply reprehends them both under one common name, *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come!* And then he goes on, *Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.* As much as if he should have said; "O ye worst of "men, ye brood of venomous miscreants! I perceive, "by your coming hither, somebody or other hath "alarmed you with the forewarnings of that dread-"ful vengeance that is falling upon this generation: "and now, to prevent it, you pretend repentance of "your sins; because you have heard that I baptize "with water unto repentance, you would needs as-"sume this outward badge of penitents. But I know "you well enough; ye are a pack of arrant knaves "and hypocrites, and howsoever at present you may

"be frightened into a demure pretence of repent-
"ance, I know your hearts are as wicked as ever;
"and that you will not part with one of those lusts
"which render you so base and infamous. And
"therefore, for my part, till I have better hopes of
"you, I am resolved I will have nothing to do with
"you." This I take to be the most natural and genuine sense of the words: and I know but one objection of any weight against it; that whereas this account makes John Baptist to have refused them his baptism, other texts of scripture seem to assert that they themselves refused to be baptized of him; and they did not come to him under a pretence of repentance, but upon a design to cavil with him, and expose his baptism to the people: for Luke vii. 30. it is said, that *the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves;* i. e. the counsel which God by John the Baptist gave them, *being not baptized of him.* But what counsel was it they rejected? Was it the counsel of being baptized? No such matter: for John Baptist never advised them to it; but the counsel he gave them was to repent, and to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance.* And this they rejected; for which they were not baptized of him. Not but that they would have been, if they could: for it is expressly said, in the verse foregoing my text, that they came to John's baptism; but John knowing their hypocrisy would by no means admit them to it, till they had first brought forth such fruits as were meet and proper for repentance. In handling of which words I shall endeavour these three things:

I. To shew what this repentance is, of which he exhorts them to bring forth the meet fruits.

II. What the meet fruits of this repentance are.

III. The necessity of bringing forth such fruits.

I. What this repentance is of which the Baptist here exhorts them to bring forth the meet fruits. To which I answer briefly, that by repentance we are to understand a sincere and thorough change of mind, which, as it hath been often observed, is the proper signification of μετάνοια, which is the word which the New Testament most commonly uses for repentance. And then the mind is changed, when the prevailing purpose and resolution of it is altered. When upon a due consideration of the mischief, indecency, or inconvenience of his present resolution, a man is effectually persuaded into a contrary purpose, his mind, we say, is changed; because he hath now a contrary judgment of things, which forms his will into a contrary resolution: and when once our mind is thus changed, as to any design or course of action, we are then said to repent of it. So that to repent of our sins is to be effectually changed and altered in our minds concerning them; so as that, whereas before we did in our practical judgment prefer them at least, *pro hic et nunc*, before our duty, and in our will embrace and resolutely adhere to them; we do now, upon cool deliberation, pronounce them to be the worst of evils, and as such do heartily purpose and resolve to forsake them. And in this consists the nature and essence of repentance, viz. in a firm resolution to forsake our sins upon cool and deliberate judgment. Where by resolution I do not mean a mere logical conclusion, by way of inference from premises, that such or such a thing is best and fittest to be done: for in this there is no choice, the proceedings of our reason being as necessary as those

of our sense; and where there is no choice, there can be no virtue. But the resolution of repentance is an act of the will, viz. its decretory and definitive sentence for the actual prosecution of such a course as upon calm deliberation is proposed as that which is most fit and necessary. For suppose our reason and sense, as two parties, pleading their respective causes and interests, the one for virtue and the other for vice; and suppose that, in the conclusion, either the matter be left in equilibrio between them, or that reason hath baffled sense, and obtained a clear conviction that the cause of virtue is infinitely best and most preferable, but that still the will is in suspense, and hath not peremptorily decreed either one way or the other; why hitherto all that hath been done is but mere speculation; there is nothing of choice in it, nothing of virtue, nor consequently of repentance. But when upon a thorough hearing of both parties the will interposes its sovereignty, and pronounces sentence on reason and virtue's side, This is my final resolution; and this, by the grace of God, I will stand to; I will from henceforth submit to my duty, how difficult soever it be, and discharge those base mischievous lusts of mine, what temptations soever may assault me: when, I say, our will, with good advice and with a full consent, hath pronounced this peremptory decree and resolution, our mind is changed, and our repentance actually commenced. Thus the prodigal son for instance, while he was considering with himself the happy state he was fallen from, *How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare*, and the miserable condition he was fallen into, *and I perish with hunger!* was only in the porch and entry of repentance; and

had he stayed there, and gone no farther, all this had been nothing but a dead speculation, notwithstanding which he would have perished in his sin. But when from hence he proceeded to that peremptory resolution, *I will arise and go to my father*, in that very moment he became a sincere penitent: and if in that instant he had been struck dead, before ever he had taken one step towards his father, he had died in a state of repentance. For it is plain his mind was changed; he had put off the old man, and put on the new; he had formed a new judgment and a new resolution: and if he had immediately died, he had died in subjection to God, and would have arose and gone to his Father, as he did while he lived. So that the precise notion of repentance, you see, consists in the change of our mind; that is, of our judgment and resolution; and hence it is called, *being renewed in the spirit of our mind*, Ephes. iv. 23. and *being transformed by the renewing of our mind*, Rom. xii. 2. Consonantly to which, Hierocles, though an heathen, thus defines repentance; Ἡ δὲ μετάνοια αὐτὴ φιλοσοφίας ἀρχὴ γίνεται, &c. that is, "Repentance is the "beginning of philosophy;" it is a renunciation of evil courses, and a preparation to a life not to be repented of. So that when a man hath repented, saith he, he neither quits real for imaginary goods, nor chooses evil for fear of unfortunate accidents; but conforms his judgment and submits his will to the divine canons. And thus you see what that repentance is, of which we are here bid to bring forth meet fruits.

II. I proceed, in the next place, to shew what those fruits are which are meet for this repentance: in general, they are such fruits, or works, as are natural

and agreeable to such an inward change of mind and resolution as repentance imports; or such as may give a plain demonstration that you are effectually convinced in your judgment of the baseness and malignity of your past sinful courses, and sincerely resolved to discard and renounce them for the future. For the fruits of repentance are nothing but the proper acts and operations of it; and it is then, and then only, that we bring forth these fruits, when the effects of a real repentance do appear in our life and conversation, and our actions do signify that our judgment condemns our faults, and our will renounces them. And according to this account, the fruits of repentance may be reduced to these following particulars.

1. An actual and thorough reformation.

2. A profound humility and self-abasement.

3. A great and tender modesty in our expectation.

4. Candour and gentleness towards others.

5. Simplicity and integrity of manners towards the offended party.

6. Caution and wariness for the future, not to offend again in the same or the like instances.

1. One necessary fruit and effect of our repentance is an actual and thorough reformation. If those invisible springs of action, the judgment and the will, be changed and rectified, the wheels of affection and the hand of practice must necessarily move more regularly and orderly: for all our inferior powers being subject to the authority of the will, and carried about with the swing of this *primum mobile*, this first great orb of the soul, do naturally apply themselves to the execution of whatsoever that decrees

and resolves on: and to suppose a man's judgment and will to be reformed, when his life is not, is to suppose that he is not a voluntary agent, but a piece of clockwork; that he is not determined in his motions by choice and deliberation, but by weights and plummets, by necessary pressures and impulses: which supposal not only strips him out of all capacity of repentance, but also contradicts all experience. For this we are as sensible of as we are of our hunger and thirst, that while we are ourselves, and can deliberate and choose, we do nothing but what we will, nothing but what we judge to be good, *pro hic et nunc*, and nothing but what we choose upon so judging. So that for a man to pretend to be a penitent in heart, whilst he is unreformed in his life, is to lie against his own experience. He knows and feels, that what he doth, he doth voluntarily, with approbation of judgment and consent of will; and therefore if his actions are bad, his judgment and will must be so too. You say you do heartily repent of your sins; by which, if you understand what you say, you mean, you do absolutely condemn them in your judgment, and peremptorily disclaim them in your will; but still you must confess, you lead a bad life, and persist in many of those sinful courses of which you hope you have heartily repented: which is as much as if you should say, I am fully resolved I will play the knave no more; but yet I must confess, I do lie and cheat as much as ever: I am peremptorily determined to be very temperate and chaste; but I must acknowledge, I am very often drunk, and do very often whore: that is to say, you do what you will not do, you will not do what you do, your will hath no influence on your actions, your

actions no relation to your will, there is no communication nor intercourse between your power of choosing and your power of acting: so that, as you cannot derive the good that is in your will to your practice; so neither can you attribute the evil that is in your practice to your will: all which is as false, and you know it is so, as any contradiction in nature. So that a thorough reformation of life, you see, is a necessary fruit and effect of repentance; and you may as well suppose a sun without light, as repentance without amendment, if there be time and opportunity for it: for if a man outlives the change of his mind, there is not a more necessary connection between his life and his motion, than there is between the change of his mind and the reformation of his manners. And hence we find, that *to repent, and turn from our evil ways; to repent, and do our first works; to repent, and be converted; to repent, and turn to God,* are in scripture very often put together, to denote the inseparable connection that there is between them.

2. Another necessary fruit and effect of our repentance is a profound humility and self-abasement: for between pride and repentance there is as direct an opposition as between any vice and virtue whatsoever. To repent of a fault is to be ashamed of it, to condemn and abhor one's self for it, to hate and renounce it as vile and abominable; and for a man to do this, and at the same time to be highly opinionated of his own desert, and plumed with glorious conceits of himself, is impossible: such a sense of our own shame and vileness as is implied in a serious and hearty repentance, can no more consist with a haughty look, a puffed and self-conceited mind, than

light with darkness, or excessive heat with bitter cold. And upon this account the Baptist might well upbraid the Pharisees, who were a sect of the most bloated monsters that appeared in human forms; and yet by offering themselves to his baptism of repentance pretended to be true penitents. "O ye proud "wretches, do you pretend to repentance? You that "have swelled yourselves with self-conceit, till ye are "ready to burst again! You that are so full of your-"selves, that you can never forbear overflowing with "self-applause and vainglory; that like a company "of bladders, are blown up with your own breath, "and swell and look big, and yet have nothing but "wind in you! Go, bring forth fruits meet for re-"pentance; let me see you grow more humble, mean, "and prostrate in your own opinions; and when by "this effect I am satisfied that you are penitents in-"deed, I will readily admit you to this my baptism "of repentance." And, God knows, we have too many such pharisaical pretenders to repentance, that under a dejected look, a solemn face, and whining tone, do carry as haughty self-conceited minds as the proudest Pharisees of them all; that having been affected a little with the sense of their sins, and cast down with the frightful apprehensions of God's wrath and displeasure, or that having suffered the terrors of the spleen, and acted through a few tragical scenes of melancholy, fancy, and passion, are presently borne aloft out of *the spirit of bondage*, as they call it, with such towering and magnificent conceits of their own sanctity and goodness, as causes them to look down with contempt upon ordinary mortals, to despise their superiors, and vilify their betters, and separate themselves into parties, that monopo-

lize all sanctity and godliness to themselves; which, whatsoever these men may think, is doubtless a very dangerous symptom of a rotten and diseased repentance. For he that hath truly repented of his sins must necessarily have discovered cause enough in them to humble and abase himself in his own eyes; and he that, after such a prospect of his own baseness and vileness as is necessary to repentance, can upon the next review applaud and admire himself, and grow fond and conceited of his own excellencies, hath a judgment with two ends, like a prospective, with which he can lessen or magnify himself as oft as he pleases.

3. Another necessary fruit of repentance is modesty. He that is so throughly sensible of a fault as heartily to repent of it, will be thereby instructed to behave himself more modestly for the future. The sense of his fault will cool his confidence, and render him more bashful and moderate in all his pretensions and expectations. Should I see a company of rebels, upon a pretence of having repented of their disloyalty, not only lay claim to their prince's mercy, but presently fall foul upon his faithful adherents, and call themselves his best and most loyal subjects, and pretend to his greatest favours and rewards, I should certainly suspect that they had no sense of their guilt; but that in their hearts they were as very rebels as ever. And thus when, upon pretence that having heartily repented of our rebellions against God, we presently grow bold and confident, and begin to crow over those who were never involved in our guilts, as a company of carnal and moral wretches; when we are immediately flushed with triumphant assurances of God's love, and our loyalty to

him, and nothing will serve our turns, but to be presently counted his darlings and favourites; it is a very ill sign, that we were never yet truly ashamed of our rebellions; that, whatever we pretend, our wills are as stubborn and disloyal as ever. And this was the true genius of the Pharisees whom the Baptist doth here so severely reprehend; who being a proud and conceited generation, as I shewed you before, made no doubt but God valued them at the same rate as they valued themselves; and though in reality they were a pack of as ill-conditioned knaves as ever walked demurely under the cloke of religion, they were as factious and turbulent, as covetous, griping, and oppressive, as the Devil himself could make them; yet because, forsooth, they were zealous for their party, and the opinions of their sect, and the little modes and affectations that distinguished them from other men, they blew themselves up into as high a confidence of God's favour to them, as if they had been the most saintly and godlike souls in the world; and did so wholly engross and monopolize the kindness of Heaven to themselves, that they would scarce allow the least share of it to any of the rest of mankind: notwithstanding which, they pretended to be penitents; and as such, it seems, would fain have been admitted to John's baptism. But he, considering how inconsistent their humour was to their pretence, bids them go *bring forth fruits meet for repentance:* as much as if he should have said, "You are a special sort of penitents in-
"deed! One would think, by the confidence of your
"talk and behaviour, you had no sins to repent of:
"why, you are the godly party, the only favourites
"of Heaven, and will allow none but yourselves to

" pretend to the smiles of God's countenance. Go, " for shame; if you would be accounted penitents, " behave yourselves as such; learn to be more mo- " dest, to live as becomes persons that are deeply af- " fected with their sins and ashamed of their guilts; " and then perhaps I may see cause to admit you to " my baptism." And certainly there is a very ill sign, when after a few pangs of sorrow and compunction, men are presently perking up into confidence and assurance; when they will needs be at the top of the ladder before ever they have touched the lowermost rounds; and be gaping for secret incomes and manifestations of God's love, before they have manifested their repentance by their obedience to him. Sure, if they were but as sensible of their guilt as they ought to be, they would be contented to lie still a while with their mouths in the dust, and be satisfied that they are not desperate of being restored to God's favour, but are admitted to hope well, that by God's blessing on their endeavours they shall at length arrive to such a state of goodness as will entitle them to God's favour and eternal life. And such modesty the sense and shame of their guilt would teach them, if it were such as is necessary to an hearty and unfeigned repentance.

4. Another necessary fruit of repentance is candour and gentleness towards others. He that hath been so affected with the sense of his own faults as heartily to repent of them, will not be very forward to censure and condemn the faults of others: his mind is so oppressed with the load of his own sins, that he is not at leisure to find fault with other men; or if he were, yet, deeply conscious, as he is, what abundant reason he hath to find fault with himself,

that gags and silences him. His own sins fly in his face while he is censuring other men's; while he is pertly exposing his neighbour's fault, his conscience twits him in the teeth, and tells him, the Devil rebukes sin: so that in his own defence he is forced to be candid and favourable to others; being conscious, should he severely reflect upon their faults, he should thereby libel and upbraid his own. And indeed it is a certain sign that men have little or no sense of the evil and baseness of their own sins, when they are so forward and flippant in animadverting upon other men's. Should you hear a deformed wretch exposing another man for the blemishes of his nature, the disproportion of his parts, or the irregularity of his features, you would doubtless conclude, that either he imagined himself to be very handsome, or designed to make a satire on his own ugliness. And so, when I hear men that are great sinners themselves, briskly declaiming against the sins of others, I cannot but conclude, that either they conceit themselves to be innocent, or have a mind to expose their own guilt and shame: but, to be sure, were they but as sensible of their own shame as they ought to be, that would restrain them from throwing dirt upon others. And doubtless it was upon this consideration, among others, that the Baptist doth here so tartly upbraid the Pharisees; who, though they had rendered themselves, by their malignant tempers and practices, the greatest pests and mischiefs of society, the most direct antipodes to the nature of God and the eternal laws of righteousness, were yet the severest censurers of other men's actions in the world.

What tragical clamours did they make against

the publicans and sinners for playing the beast, while they themselves played the devil! What base interpretations did they make of the holy and innocent freedoms of our Saviour; whom, because he was not of their sour and unsociable temper, they damned for a winebibber and a friend of publicans and sinners! In a word, who was more forward than they to emblazon the faults of other men, to fetch and carry scandalous reports, and shake their heads at the iniquities of the times, when, God knows, they themselves were the greatest plagues and scandals of the age they lived in? And with this rancour and bitterness of temper they would needs pretend to be penitents: upon which the Baptist bids them bring forth such fruits as were proper for penitents. As if he should have said; "One may easily discern "what goodly penitents you are, how deeply you "are affected with your own sins, by the noise and "clamour you make against other men's. You have "wickedness enough of your own to censure and "make invectives on; but while you should be look-"ing inwards, your eyes are in the ends of the earth, "observing other men's faults and miscarriages. Go, "if you would appear to be penitents, learn to be "more severe upon yourselves, and more candid to "other men; to make the worst of your own faults, "and the best of your neighbours, and then I shall "have reason to hope that you are penitents indeed." But it is fulsome hypocrisy for men to pretend to repentance, whilst they are bitterly censorious, and apt to judge hardly of other men. And to men of understanding, there is nothing can be more ridiculous, than to see one that is just fallen off from a lewd and dissolute course of life, presently set up for a

censor of the age; and with a wise and serious forehead animadverting upon the freedoms and declaiming against the debaucheries of this or the other man: which, whatsoever he may think, is a plain demonstration that he hath never been duly affected with the sense of his own sin; and that he is only changing one kind of wickedness for another. For were he but throughly convinced how bad he hath been himself, he would be ashamed to clamour and inveigh against other men; and the great sense he would have of the beam in his own eye, would make him less apt to take notice of the mote in his neighbours.

5. Another necessary fruit of repentance is simplicity of heart and integrity of manners towards the party offended. For though it is a maxim in policy, not to trust a reconciled enemy; yet, could I be secure of the sincerity of his reconciliation, I should have more reason to trust him than a constant friend; because if he be throughly sensible that he hath unjustly offended me, and hath heartily repented of it, it is reasonably to be supposed that he will not only use me as a friend for the future, but as a friend whom he hath injured and unjustly provoked; and consequently, that the sense of the injury he hath done me will make him supererogate in friendship; and, by a superabundance of good offices, endeavour, not only to discharge what the laws of friendship exact, but also to expiate the unjust provocations he hath given me. For the very sense of a past injury, when it is heartily repented of, doth naturally kindle into a cordial affection towards him whom we have injured: and thus, if we have heartily repented of our sins against God, the sense of what is past will

render us more sincere and cordial to him for the future; and by how much the more we have provoked and offended him, by so much the more studious we shall be to serve and obey him. But if our pretended repentance produces in us no other effect but an outward show of obedience, and renders us more studious to *appear* good than *be* so; if it puts us upon picking and choosing our duty, upon being zealous about small things to compensate our negligence and remissness about great, it is an infallible sign that it is merely pretended, and that all the shows we make of reconciliation are nothing but mere visors and counterfeits. And such was the temper and disposition of the Pharisees; they took care to disguise themselves in a pompous form of godliness, and to carry a very demure and sanctified outside. Their looks were solemn, austere, and mortified; their tongues all tipped with the language of Canaan; their motions and gestures were artificially composed to the tune of an humble and heavenly mind; they fasted thrice a week, and prayed so long, that they made all the streets ring again with their loud and clamorous devotions, and gave alms too now and then in a good echo, whence they might be sure to hear their charities resounded after them in praises and commendations. They kept a mighty noise about the fringes and phylacteries, the external circumstances and appendages of religion; and were most zealous assertors of pure ordinances and pure worship: but under all this formality, our Saviour tells them, they were *whited sepulchres;* who, though they looked gloriously without, are full of rottenness within. For this demure outside of theirs was only a disguise, under which they cheated and played the

knave more securely. Their long prayers were nothing but specious introductions to their rapines and oppressions. Their alms were their decoys, which they sent forth on purpose to train simple and well-meaning people into their nets. Their zeal for the mint and cumin was the varnish of their fraud and injustice. Their long fasts for reformation were stirrups to their ambition of being uppermost; and their constant refreshment after them were widows' and orphans' tears. In a word, they could cheat in saintly language, play the knaves with their hands and eyes lift up to heaven; and while they seemed to be as fervent as angels in their devotions, they were as false and treacherous as devils in their dealings. And yet these base people would needs have been admitted for penitents to the baptism of John; who, considering the inconsistency of their temper with their pretence, tartly upbraids them, and bids them *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*: that is, Learn to be more simple and sincere in their carriage towards their offended God; study more to be penitents than to appear such; contract your show into reality, and let it appear by your sincere respect to God, and devotion to his service, that you do heartily repent of your rebellions against him. And certainly there can be nothing more suspicious, than for a young penitent to affect to make a great show of religion: for true repentance is naturally bashful and modest; it shuns the theatre, the tops of houses, the corners of streets, and is best pleased with silence and retirement; and provided God sees its tears, and hears its sighs and holy purposes, it desires no other spectator or auditor. For the great design of a penitent is to reconcile himself to God;

and if he be but so sensible of his sin as heartily to repent of it, by how much the more he hath offended him for the time past, by so much the more he will study to please him for the time to come.

6. And lastly, Another necessary fruit of repentance is caution and wariness for the future, not to offend again in the same or the like instances. For repentance is a penal duty, in which a man undergoes some degree of the smart and punishment of his fault; in which he endures the shame and confusion of a guilty mind, the regrets and remorses of an awakened conscience; and the burnt child, we say, will dread the fire. He that hath undergone the severe discipline of a deep repentance will be sure to take warning by it, and be very cautious for the future not to approach those sins for which he hath smarted so severely. And hence we find, that repentance is not only expressed in scripture by μετάνοια, which signifies a *change* of mind; but also by μεταμέλεια, which signifies an *after-care:* which shews, that though the essence of repentance consists in the μετάνοια, or *change* of our mind; yet μεταμέλεια, or an *after-care* to avoid those sins from which our minds are changed and converted, is a necessary effect and fruit of repentance; it being an usual figure in scripture to express causes by their natural and easy effects. And indeed when I see men boldly approaching and venturing towards those vices of which they pretend to have heartily repented, I cannot but suspect that their repentance is nothing but a pretence; that it was only a present pet and distaste that they took against their sin, upon some ungrateful accident, or under a sudden qualm of conscience; and that it never proceeded so far as to a

cool and deliberate change of their judgment and resolution concerning it. For certainly, had they undergone those lashes of conscience, those sharp and cutting reflections that are usually necessary to prepare the way for such a change, they could never be so fool-hardy as to *play upon the hole of the asp* again, and to *thrust their hands into the den of the cockatrice*, after they have been so severely stung by it: and the remembrance of those agonies of soul, those spasms and convulsions of conscience which their sin hath already cost them, would make them tremble to think of it, and be instead of a sea-mark, to forewarn and terrify them from approaching it again. But such was the humour of the Pharisees, that though they pretended to be penitents, yet when it served their cause and interest, they were as bold and venturous at an evil action as ever. For so our Saviour, long after this reprehension of the Baptist, and consequently after this pretence of repentance, charges them with being as intimate and familiar with their old vices as ever. It was their way indeed, and so it was always, to make their religion a cloak and pretence for their wickedness: but to serve their own faction, which they called propagating the glory of God, they esteemed nothing unlawful. And though in any point that was repugnant to the interest of their sect, they were the most nice and scrupulous people in the world; yet to serve their cause they could lie and forswear themselves, with the help of a juggling reserve or distinction, as our Saviour observes of them, Matt. xxiii. 16. And, no doubt, but they could have taken oaths and sacraments too against their consciences, to keep their places in the sanhedrim, and

there carry on their factious and turbulent designs. It being therefore evident, by their being so venturous upon sinful actions, that their pretence to repentance was false, the Baptist dismisses them with this severe admonition; *Go, bring forth fruits meet for repentance:* i.e. Let me see you more wary and cautious of running into those sinful courses, of which you now pretend to repent, and then I shall have some reason to believe that you are penitents indeed. And certainly, while a man affects to draw near to his old sins, and to dwell in the neighbourhood of them; while he delights in their remembrance, and loves to sport and entertain himself with their phantastic pleasures; while he affects to dwell within view of their temptations, to venture to the very edge and brink of them, to the very utmost limits of lawful and innocent; it is a very ill sign that he never had that thorough sense of their malignity and danger that is necessary to an hearty repentance: for if he had, he would be afraid of all approaches and tendencies towards them, and be ready to start and run away, not only from the sins themselves, but from their appearances and resemblances.

And thus I have endeavoured to give you an account of the natural fruits and effects of true repentance; by considering of which, and impartially consulting our own experience of ourselves, we may easily determine, whether the repentance we pretend to, if we pretend to any at all, be true or false. We live in an age that doth so abound with all sorts and degrees of wickedness, that a man can hardly mention any kind of wickedness, or party of wicked men, that are branded for either in sacred or profane history, but it is presently suspected that his design is

to reproach and expose some party or other among ourselves. And I confess, if men will set themselves to guessing who is meant by the Pharisees, who by the Sadducees, they may find parallels enough of both in this degenerate age: and, God knows, they go together too often now in pursuance of worse designs, than those Sadducees and Pharisees that came together to John's baptism. But if any should ask me, who or what party of men it is I reflect upon in these severe representations I have made of pharisaical pretenders to repentance, I can truly answer, that I intend no one party of whatsoever denomination; there being among all parties a great many that do not so much as pretend to repentance; and among most, as I verily hope, a great many that do more than pretend to it. But the Pharisees whom I mean, are those whom the Baptist, and after him our Saviour himself, do so smartly inveigh against: and if you please to consult St. Matthew xxiii. you will there find them treated with much more severity by the meekest and most charitable person that ever was. But if in any party among ourselves there be any such hypocrites and false pretenders to repentance as these Pharisees were, as I doubt there are too many among all parties, I must then ingenuously acknowledge, that I mean them too. And if any thing that hath been said should reflect upon and gall them, they ought to consider that that is their own fault. They may avoid being hypocrites, but we must not avoid declaiming against hypocrisy; and whenever we do so, we must reflect upon them, whether we will or no. If men will be hypocrites, our Saviour's sermon, as well as this, will upbraid and expose them;

and if it doth so, it is not his fault, but theirs who made themselves obnoxious to his satires and invectives. The only way for you to avoid the edge of such reflections, is to become honest and sincere penitents; but if you will not, you must thank yourselves if it cuts and wounds you. For if our Saviour himself had stood this day in this place, and preached over his sermon to the Pharisees, it would have been impossible for you not to have been touched and concerned at it; and if you should be so disingenuous as to fall foul on me, as they did on him, I will only propose St. Paul's query to you, *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* And so I have done with the second thing proposed, which was, to shew you what are the proper fruits and effects of repentance.

III. I now proceed to the third and last argument; namely, to shew the indispensable necessity of bringing forth these fruits: which I shall endeavour to make appear by these following instances:

1. That we should bring forth these meet fruits of repentance is necessary to the satisfaction of God.

2. It is necessary to the satisfaction of our own consciences.

3. It is necessary to the obligation of repentance.

4. It is necessary to the perfection of our natures.

1. That we should bring forth these meet fruits of repentance is necessary to the satisfaction of God. For though it be wholly owing to Christ's satisfaction, that lost sinners are admitted to a possibility of recovering themselves by the after-game of repentance; yet God, we see, hath declared, that without

our repentance he will not be satisfied. Neither indeed doth Christ's satisfaction extend to final impenitence; it cancels none of our guilts, but only those which we heartily repent of; but as to all the rest, we are as accountable to the tribunal of God, as if he had never died for us. So that all the favour which the meritorious satisfaction of our Saviour hath obtained for us is only this, that our repentance shall be accepted instead of our punishment; that is, that if we unfeignedly repent of our sins, we shall thereupon be set as right in the sight of God, and in the court of heaven, as if we had undergone the utmost rigour of the law. So that now our repentance being accepted of by God instead of our punishment, it is necessary that it should be such a repentance, as doth in some measure answer and fulfil the ends of our punishment. For since it is for wise and good ends that God punishes, it is not to be expected that he will accept of any thing in the stead of our punishment, which doth not in some measure fulfil and accomplish those ends; and this no repentance can do, but that which produces the proper fruits of repentance. For the principal end of punishment is either to amend the criminal himself, or to warn others not to imitate his sins by the example of his sufferings; which ends can never be effected by our repentance, unless it produce in us the visible fruits of amendment. For suppose it possible that I should have internally repented, i. e. that my mind should be really changed, that in my judgment I should absolutely condemn my sinful courses, and in my will I should be peremptorily resolved against them, and no actual and visible reformation should follow; if this, I say, were possible, it is plain my

repentance would be wholly ineffectual, both as to my own amendment and the amendment of others. If indeed I actually avoided the sins I condemn and am resolved against, my repentance would effect the ends of my punishment; that is, it would make me a better man; it would reform my nature, rectify my motions, and extinguish my bad inclinations and corrupt principles, and prove an effectual means to reform others too; who, by the good example of my actions, might be as effectually wrought upon, as by the sad example of my sufferings. And God having thus obtained his ends by my repentance, there is very good reason why he should dispense with my punishment. But if after I have condemned my sin, and resolved against it, neither myself nor other men can be reformed and amended by it; this change of my mind will have no influence on my nature; it will never correct its disorderly affections, nor subdue its wild and extravagant inclinations; but leave it altogether as vicious and degenerate as it found it. Neither will it have any good influence upon others, because it doth not appear to them in any visible effects. So that it is only by bringing forth its natural fruits, that our repentance or change of mind serves the ends of God's punishments; and it is unreasonable to expect, that God should accept of our repentance for our punishment, when it doth not at all serve the purpose of our punishment. For this would be to defeat himself, to countermine and baffle his own intentions, and fondly to give up his wise and good ends to the obstinacy and perverseness of his creatures. You would fain have God dispense with your punishment; well, but you ought to consider, that there are very wise

and good ends that he drives at in punishing you. Would you have him give up these ends? That is unreasonable; that is to desire him to acknowledge that his ends are not worth aiming at. Why, what is to be done then? I will tell you what: you must give him his ends by your repentance; that is, by bringing forth such fruits of repentance as will effectually amend you, and contribute to amend others; and then you may be secure that God will be satisfied: but if not, be assured he will prosecute his ends by your punishment, and take care to warn others by the sad example of your sufferings, since you would not take care to warn them by the good example of your actions.

2. That we should bring forth the meet fruits of repentance is also necessary to the satisfaction of our consciences: for without such fruits a man can never be rationally satisfied that his repentance is real and sincere: for if we have made any observation upon ourselves, we cannot but be sensible of our own fickleness and mutability, how many sorts of men we are under our several circumstances; how our mind veers about upon every change of wind, and into what contrary tempers it is moulded upon contrary chances and contingencies. And having such an abundant experience of our own inconsistency, how can we rationally conclude upon every variation of temper, that this or that is our fixed judgment or our standing resolution; that the mind we are now in will not change upon the next change of our circumstances; and that when contrary accidents occur, we shall not take up contrary resolutions; especially when our resolutions do oppose our inclinations, and our inclinations are per-

petually importuned and solicited by outward objects and temptations; which is our case in the matter of repentance. In this case, for men to conclude from the present bent and inclination of their wills that they are steadily fixed and determined to good resolutions, is a piece of very unreasonable self-assurance: for when they know themselves to be so fickle and inconstant in matters to which their inclinations are more indifferent, how much reason have they to suspect the firmness of those resolutions to which their inclinations are so extremely averse, and from which so many outward objects are continually beckoning and inviting them? In this case therefore we have no other way to be rationally satisfied of the firmness and stability of the change of our mind, but only by the fruits and effects of it: for if, when it hath opportunity, it doth not pass forth into action, and display itself upon our lives in an answerable practice; if it doth not ordinarily restrain us from those evils it condemns and resolves against, and spur us on to those good things it approves and consents to, it is most certain it is a mere cheat and imposture. For let men say what they please, it is impossible that any man should live in those vicious courses which they absolutely condemn and are sincerely resolved against: they may now and then quarrel at their sins, and take pet against them upon some little disappointment or unhandsome accident, and in the heat of their distaste they may condemn and renounce them; but if when their passion is allayed they resent and return to them again, it is plain that their minds were never changed, and that the current of their judgment and will was only interrupted by a contrary gust, but

that it was never diverted into a contrary channel. So that what our Saviour asserts of men is as true of their repentance, *the tree is known by its fruits:* if our repentance be genuine, it will bring forth the fruit of reformation; but if it be barren, or bring forth nothing but leaves and good words and professions, it is certainly spurious and hypocritical. However therefore men may juggle with and impose upon their consciences with false shows and semblances, they can never hope to be rationally satisfied of the truth of their repentance, till the natural fruits and effects of it appear in their lives and conversations.

3. That we should bring forth these meet fruits of repentance is also necessary to satisfy the obligation of repentance: for repentance is not required of us merely for its own sake, but in order to the fruits and effects of it; and the reason why God obliges us to this change of our mind is, because it is a necessary introduction to a thorough change and reformation of our manners: and for a man to condemn sin in his judgment merely to condemn it, and resolve against it in his will merely to resolve against it, is so far from being a virtue, that it is a ridiculous impertinence. And if we still practise what we condemn, and do what we resolve against, we are so far from answering the obligation of repentance, that we do but enhance and aggravate our impenitence. For he that doth what he condemns, sins against his knowledge, and flies in the face of his own convictions; and he that doth what he resolves against, sins against his promise, and basely falsifies his own engagements. So that the mere change of our mind, you see, abstractedly considered, doth by no

means answer the obligation to repentance; because the obligation doth not terminate in itself, but is made with respect to the natural effects of such a change; and because this change in itself is of no farther use and significancy in religion, than as it is pregnant with and productive of those effects. For either the sin which I condemn in my judgment is such an evil as I ought to shun and avoid, or it is not: if it be not, it is no virtue in me to condemn that for an evil, which I need not take care to avoid: if it be, it is a folly to condemn it, unless I also avoid it. And so again, either the duty I consent to and resolve upon in my will is necessarily to be done, or it is not: if it be not, it is unnecessary for me to resolve to do it: if it be, it is in vain to resolve to do it, unless I perform my resolution. For as a cipher, which is only in order to a number, signifies nothing, unless a number be added to it; so resolution, which is only in order to action, is perfectly insignificant, unless it be seconded with action. And since it is nothing but the necessity of doing what we resolve that can make it necessary for us to resolve to do it, we must either deny the necessity even of our resolving to amend, or acknowledge the necessity of our actual amendment. So that that inward change of our mind, which repentance imports, being required only in order to the outward change of our manners, it is impossible we should satisfy the obligation of repentance without bringing forth the fruits of actual amendment.

4. And lastly, That we should bring forth these meet fruits of repentance is also necessary to accomplish the great work and design of repentance; which is, to repair the decays and ruins of our nature, and

recover it from the diseases it hath contracted by sinful courses, to a state of health and perfection. For repentance supposes a degeneracy of our nature, and the great business and design of it is to raise and recover us. And hence the prodigal's repentance is called, *coming to himself*, Luke xv. 17. implying, that before he was gone from himself; that he had abandoned his reason, by which he was constituted a man, forsaken the guide and leading principle of his nature, and was degenerated either into a beast or a devil: which is a very proper description of the state of sinners; who, when they depart from God, depart from themselves, and run out of humanity into bestiality and devilishness. For they do not govern themselves by reason, as men should do, but by their passions and appetites, as beasts and devils do; they turn a deaf ear to the voice of their reason and conscience, and constantly choose and refuse what their own black passions and appetites direct them; and in the whole course of their lives do act like upright beasts or incarnate devils. The proper business therefore of repentance is to bring back these vagrants to themselves, and restore them to their wits and reason; to rescue them out of the hands of passion and appetite, and put them under the power of reason and conscience; that so for the future they may live like themselves, and as becomes rational beings that are related to God and one another. This is the proper work of repentance, which it can never effect, without it bring forth its natural fruits. For he that so repents of his evil courses as not to correct and reform them, how is it possible he should ever be the better for them, when he moves not a step forward from the corrupt and degenerate

state of his nature, but only dances round in a circle, and sins and repents, and repents and sins, and at last still returns to the same point. The only way to reform our nature, and subject its passions and appetites to its reason, is to live well, and regulate our actions by the laws of reason and righteousness. By this we shall by degrees tame and reduce our irregular inclinations, and readvance our reason to its native throne and dominion: by forcing ourselves, as we must do at first, to the practice of virtue and religion, we shall by degrees acquire virtuous dispositions, and those will improve into virtuous habits, and those in the end will grow to perfection. But if we only condemn our sins, and resolve against them, but do not actually renounce and forsake them, instead of bettering our nature we shall more and more debauch and deprave it, and be still declining from bad to worse, and from worse to worse, till at last our disease becomes desperate and incurable. So that it is indispensably necessary, you see, that we should *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*; because, unless we do, it is impossible our repentance should ever accomplish the work it is designed for; that it should heal and reform our nature, extinguish its vicious inclinations, and adorn it with those graces wherein its beauty and perfection consists: and we were every whit as good not to repent at all, as to repent so as to be never the better for it. And now give me leave to conclude this argument with a few inferences.

1. From hence I infer what a ridiculous thing it is for men to make a fond pretence of zeal for religion, while the direct contraries to all the natural fruits of repentance do most visibly appear in their

lives and conversations. I confess, of all the offices that belong to a preacher, I am naturally most averse to that of reprehension. I do not love to expose men's faults, and rake in their filthy dunghills; and it is not only my charity to mankind, but also the indisposition of my nature to find fault, that makes me so heartily wish, O would to God that men were once so good, as to need no reprehension! that so we might have nothing to do but to praise and encourage them, to excite them to go on with the comforts of religion, and the just applauses and encomiums of their virtues. But, alas! we live in an age that would make a stone to speak, and force any man of any conscience, in despite of all the candour and modesty of his nature, to cry aloud against the fulsome hypocrisies and impostures that look through our most glorious pretences to religion. For, for God's sake, sirs, is it not a shame, a burning shame, to hear a company of professed atheists and notorious knaves set up for zealots and reformers, and raise a clamour for liberty of conscience and pure ordinances? As for the sober and pious dissenters, I can bear their mistakes with as much tenderness and compassion as any man; and can make them as large allowances as I could reasonably desire for myself, if I were in their condition. But when I see men rank themselves under the banners of religion, that live in open hostility to its commands and precepts, that make no conscience of blaspheming the name of God, traducing his vicegerents and representatives, defaming and defrauding their neighbours, and exposing the most sacred and serious things to scorn and derision, I cannot but suspect that there is mischief behind the curtain, what zealous appearances soever they may make

upon the stage. For it can never enter into my head, and I wonder how it should into any body's else, that those men should ever design well to religion, whose principles and practices are so openly irreligious. They may pretend religion, (for that is so venerable a name, that it will serve to set a fair colour upon the ugliest intentions,) but though we may be deceived by a well-disguised hypocrisy, yet sure we can never believe that profaneness is in earnest, when it pretends to be zealous for religion and a thorough reformation. O would to God that men would at least be so honest as to appear what they are, or at least not be so ridiculous, as to pretend the quite contrary to what they appear! It would make an honest heart bleed to see how religion, how the protestant religion, is rendered cheap and vile, by the impudent pretences which bad men make to it; men whose lives are bad enough to disgrace popery itself, and who are protestants only because they are not papists. In the name of God, sirs, what have you to do with any religion, and much more with the protestant, which, by its pure and honest principles, defies and renounces you; which abominates your designs and disavows your actions, and blushes to see how you profane and scandalize it, by pretending friendship to and familiarity with it? For what will strangers think of it, that understand not its principles, when they hear such as you claim such an intimate acquaintance with it? How prone will they be to suspect that it is a religion for your tooth, and that it shelters and patronises you in all your wickedness? Wherefore, for God's sake, be at length so just to the reputation of that religion you pretend so much zeal for, as either to bring forth the fruits of

it, by living up to its principles, or not concern yourselves any farther about it. For this I am sure of, while such as you pretend to it, it loses much more by the disgrace which your lives do cast upon it, than ever it is like to gain by your zeal and your clamour for it.

2. Hence I also infer, how extremely insufficient that repentance is, which the church of Rome doth frankly approve and allow of; which is such as plainly evacuates and supersedes the necessity of bringing forth the natural fruits of repentance; as any one may easily apprehend, that will but take the pains impartially to consider the chain of that church's principles. For first, the council of Trent teaches, that attrition, which is nothing but a sorrow for sin, proceeding from the fear of punishments, doth dispose men to receive grace in the sacrament of penance; and that all sacraments of the gospel, of which penance is one, do actually confer grace upon those that are disposed for it. So that if he hath but the grace to be afraid of hell, and to be sorry that he is in danger of it, it is but confessing his sins to a priest, and undergoing a short trifling penance, and upon a few words of absolution he shall presently be dubbed a true penitent, and be as effectually instated in the favour of God, as if he had brought forth all the fruits of repentance. And this, Bellarmine tells us, is the current judgment of all their divines; which if it be true, poor Judas had very ill luck to be damned: for, according to this doctrine, he was throughly disposed for justification, it being out of mere attrition that he hanged himself: so that had he had but a priest to have administered penance and absolution to him, that grace that made

him hang himself, would have entitled him to heaven. It is true indeed, they tell us, there is a certain penance which men must undergo for their sins in this life; and that, if they should not perform what is imposed upon them, or if what is imposed should not be sufficient to satisfy God's justice, they must be forced to make it up by their sufferings in purgatory. But even against this too that church hath contrived an excellent remedy; and that is, the treasury of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints; of which, at very reasonable rates, men may purchase such a share as will immediately pay off all their purgatory scores, how great soever their present sins, and how small soever their present penances are. For out of this treasury of merit you may have indulgence for a hundred, a thousand, or a hundred thousand years; and if this will not satisfy, you may, besides this, have full indulgence, fuller indulgence, and fullest indulgence; and it is impossible you should ever want merit to keep your soul out of purgatory, if you have but money and hearts to pay for it. But if you should still be doubtful, you may secure all, if you please, by listing yourself in an holy confraternity: for if you will but turn brother of St. Francis his cord, you shall presently be entitled to such a stock of indulgences, as all the sins you can commit will never be able to outspend. For at your first putting on this sacred implement, you have as full and as effectual pardon as was ever vouchsafed in the sacrament of baptism. And afterwards, should you fall into mortal sin, it is but taking so much pains as to walk after the monthly procession, and you shall have a plenary indulgence which shall attend your holy cord to the very article of your

death. Besides which, you shall have your share in all the superabundant merits of the saints, of the order of saint Rose's, and saint Clara's, and saint Francis himself, who, by preaching to beasts, and teaching larks and swallows their catechism, and silly sheep to bleat out their canonical hours, with sundry other such like holy feats, could not fail to treasure up a vast stock of merits in the common bank of his fraternity. Or, if you would be surer yet, you may enter yourself a brother of the holy fraternity of the hundred and fifty beads of St. Dominic; where, for saying over an hundred and fifty Ave-Marys and fifteen Paternosters in a week, you shall not only be allowed your dividend of the superabundant merits of all the saints from Adam, and as many indulgences as you can possibly have occasion for yourself, but such an overplus as will be sufficient to redeem an hundred and fifteen souls yearly out of purgatory. And it would be a very hard case if with all this tackle you should go to purgatory yourself. But if the worst come to the worst, it is but enrolling yourself a brother of St. Simon's scapular, and then, if you should go to purgatory, the Virgin Mary hath engaged herself, if pope John XXII. doth not foully belie her, to come down to purgatory every Saturday night, and pull up every soul thence that hath worn this sacred vestment into the holy hill of eternal life. And when a friar's cord, or rochet, or string of beads, are such excellent tools for men to work out their salvation with, what need they trouble themselves to bring forth the fruits of repentance? Had these things been only the conceits of some particular members of that church, I should not have mentioned them in this place; because to us they

cannot but look to be extremely ridiculous: but, alas! they are cheats that have been founded and established on the bulls of their popes, avowed and contended for by their gravest doctors, and reverenced and believed by the devoutest members of their communion. And how can they be obliged to bring forth the fruits of repentance, who are furnished with so many pretty devices to get to heaven without them?

3. And lastly, Hence therefore let us all be persuaded heartily to comply with this injunction, and bring forth the natural fruits of repentance: first, to form a hearty and deliberate resolution against our sins; and then to put it into execution, by forsaking all *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and *living soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* I do not deny but in this undertaking there are many times very great difficulties, especially when we first enter upon it, when after a long course of folly we begin to reform: for then we must wrestle against our own inclinations, and struggle with inveterate habits; and this, perhaps, will put us to a greater trial of our courage and constancy than we are now aware of. But if, upon a due consideration of the arguments on both sides, we can but once persuade ourselves to a thorough resolution of amendment, in all probability we have broke the heart of the main difficulty of repentance. It is, I confess, a hard thing for a man to persuade himself against all his habits and inclinations, to resolve without any reserve, in cold and deliberate thoughts, upon a universal reformation; at once to resolve to bid adieu for ever to all his darling lusts and their appendant pleasures. This, as our Saviour describes it, is like the *cutting off of a right hand*, and the *plucking out*

of a right eye; and therefore must doubtless be attended with vehement strugglings and reluctances: but when this is done, the sharpest pang of our repentance is over; and if now we do not wilfully miscarry, these our bitter throes, like the virgin mother's, will soon conclude in songs and magnificats. For by arming a firm resolution against them, we have already broken the main strength of our lusts; so that now we have nothing to do but to pursue our victory; and if we have but courage to keep the ground we have gotten, and to stand firm to our resolution, that so our conquered foe may not be able to rally and reinforce himself against us, we shall soon be crowned with the joys of a victory that will lead us into an everlasting triumph. For our evil habits being for a while kept under a constant and severe restraint, will by degrees decay and languish, and at last expire, and then the trouble of contending will be over, and all our consequent religion will be sweet, and natural, and easy; and we shall reap far more pleasure and delight from it, than ever we did from the most jolly course of sinning. For besides that a religious life is in itself more agreeable to our rational faculties, and consequently more grateful unto human nature, whose noblest pleasures do result from the exercise of her highest faculties, and whose highest faculties are never so vigorously exercised as within the sphere of a religious life; besides which, I say, we shall therein find an unspeakable satisfaction of mind, and such a calm of conscience, and such ravishing joys and delights springing out of our sense of the love of God, and our hopes of a blessed immortality hereafter, as will abundantly compensate all our labours past, and ren-

der them not only tolerable, but delightsome. For how can I think any pains intolerable, the endurance whereof will create a constant harmony within me, will crown me with the applause of my own mind, will endear me to the fountain of all love and goodness, and entertain me with the hopes of being as happy, after a few moments, as all the joys of an everlasting heaven can make me? But, I beseech you to consider, is it not much easier to endure the agonies of a bitter repentance, than the horrid despair of a damned ghost? to thwart a foolish and unreasonable lust, than to roar for ever upon the rack of a self-condemning conscience? If it be so grievous to us to contend with an evil habit, and struggle a while with a stiff and obstinate inclination, to resolve, and strive, and watch, and pray against them, *Lord, how grievous* will it be to *dwell with everlasting burnings*, and to endure the dire effects of thy unquenchable fury for ever? And one of these must certainly be endured; for between them there is no medium. Wherefore seeing we are under such an absolute necessity of enduring hell or the difficulties of repentance, in the name of God, let us but act like men, and of the two choose that which is most tolerable; and then I am sure we shall follow the counsel of the text, and *bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

DISCOURSE IV.

UPON

MATTHEW XXV. 10.

——*and the door was shut.*

THESE words are the close of the parable of the ten virgins, whom our Saviour distributes into five wise and five foolish; and by them he represents the different carriage and fate of men both good and bad. For the better understanding of which parable, you must know that our Saviour borrowed this, as well as sundry others, from the Jewish doctors; of which our learned Sheringham, in his preface of his translation of the Joma, hath given us sundry instances; of which this is one; which to this purpose he transcribes out of the Gemara Babylonica: Rab. Eliezer said, "Be sure thou repent the day before "thou diest." Upon which his disciples asked him, whether a man might know that hour of his death? Whereunto he answers, "Let a man therefore re-"pent every day, because he knows not when he "shall die." Upon which Rab. Jochanan proposes this parable: A certain rich man prepared a marriage feast, to which he called his servants, but did not tell them the distinct time when his feast should be: of these servants some were wise and some foolish; the wise clothed themselves splendidly, and sitting before their master's house, thus thought with themselves; All things are here prepared, and nothing is wanting: wherefore, since we are uncertain what hour we shall be called, we will wait, that so

whensoever he calls us we may be ready to attend. But the foolish sleepy servants loitered away their time, concluding thus with themselves; We need not be over-hasty in making ourselves ready, it being yet a great while before we are like to be called. But on a sudden the master calls them all to the supper; upon which the wise appeared before him ready to attend, but the foolish, being unready, would fain have gone away to dress themselves; but the king, rejoicing for those who were ready, and being very angry with those that slept, said, You who are ready shall sit down and eat, and drink, and rejoice; whilst you that slept shall be shut out of door: for so saith the Lord; Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall hunger; my servants shall drink, but you shall thirst. This is the Jewish parable, which for substance being so exactly agreeable with our Saviour's, we may very reasonably conclude that his was only a copy of that original: and since the design of it is evidently to shew the danger of delaying repentance to the last, we may fairly suppose the design of our Saviour to be so too. For by the wise and foolish virgins here, our Saviour plainly means good and bad Christians; and by the marriage feast, that state of happiness which he hath prepared for the good. By their going forth to meet the bridegroom, is meant their expectation of Christ's coming, either to their particular or to the general judgment. By their lamps in their hands, expositors generally understand their visible profession of Christianity. By the oil that made those lamps to shine, is meant charity and good works, which are the fruits of a sincere repentance, and the glory and lustre of our Christian profession. And as for the wise, who by sincere repent-

ance had prepared themselves for this feast of heavenly happiness, they are admitted into it; but as for the foolish, that had put off all to the last, though they bestirred themselves very vigorously in this sad extremity, yet all this was to no purpose; for when they came to ask admittance into heaven, the door was shut against them, and they are dismissed with this bitter farewell, *Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.* So that the design of the words is plainly to represent the sad catastrophe of a late repentance; which though it may be very active and vigorous when things are reduced to the last extremity, yet proves most commonly ineffectual, and finds the door of heaven shut against it.

That therefore which I design from these words is this, to explain and state what is the effect of a death-bed repentance; by which I mean, such a repentance as, after a long course of wickedness, begins upon the very near and sensible approach, either of a natural or violent death; such as is put off till death is at the door, and men perceive themselves to be departing hence, and going away into eternity. For as for that repentance which is begun in health, when death is not in view, and men are in the midst of temptations to the contrary, it is much more free and ingenuous than that of a death-bed can be supposed; and consequently, though it should be stopped in its progress by a sudden unexpected death, yet there is much more hope of it: and that which begins also in a long lingering sickness, though it be not so free as the former, and therefore not so hopeful; yet is there much more hope of it, than of that which begins in more acute diseases, to which death more suddenly follows; because it hath much more time

to grow in, and to finish and complete itself by. That late or death-bed repentance therefore, concerning which we are now inquiring, must be such a repentance as begins in the prospect of a near approaching death, and to which that death doth very suddenly follow. Concerning which I shall inquire these three things:

I. How far it is possible for such a repentance to be effectual.

II. How extremely hazardous it is whether it ever actually prove effectual to our happiness or no.

III. If it should prove so, yet how impossible it is, in an ordinary way, for us to attain any comfortable assurance of it.

I. How far it is possible for such a repentance to be effectual. And here I dare not pronounce it to be absolutely and universally ineffectual, though I confess I am horribly afraid that it very rarely proves otherwise. For the repentance on which salvation is entailed necessarily includes a thorough change of soul; that is, a new prevailing judgment and resolution: and for certain, wheresoever this really is, there is true repentance. For the very life of repentance consists in the universal subjection of our souls to God; and this subjection consists in such a firm resolution of soul to obey him, as, whensoever occasion is offered, will render us actually obedient. I know there are some who place this subjection of their souls to God in an universal habit of obedience; but surely they do not consider that an habit of obedience, which consists in an inherent aptness and faculty of obeying, is not attainable under a long progress in religion; and that in our first entrance into the religious state, we are so far from being ha-

bituated to obey God, that we generally obey with a great deal of difficulty; and while we do so, it is a contradiction to say we are habituated to obedience. So that by placing the soul's subjection to God in such a habit, we undermine the comfort of all beginners in religion, and exclude all those from being faithful servants, who have not conquered those difficulties of obeying. And therefore I think it much more safe to place our first subjection to God in a hearty resolution of obeying: for as choice and resolution is the principle of all our voluntary actions, so it is of our subjection to God; which being a moral action, must be voluntary, and so begin in choice or resolution; from whence, if it hath opportunity, it will proceed into action; and that being often repeated, will gradually improve into an habit, and so in time render it natural and easy to us. But if death should intervene, and deprive the man who is thus sincerely resolved, on all opportunities of actual obedience, that being accidental, makes no change in his main state; the frame and temper of his soul remains the same; it goes into eternity a faithful subject to God; and had it continued longer here, would have expressed its subjection in all the necessary acts of homage and obedience. And far be it from us to imagine the condition of such a soul to be desperate: for though it is true, that a holy life is the indispensable condition of salvation; yet it is also true, that a holy life is necessarily included in this subjection of our souls to God. That man doth live a holy life who sincerely submits his soul to God, and is firmly resolved, as occasion offers, to express his submission in all the external acts of homage and obedience. It is true, the death-bed penitent hath not opportunity

to exercise himself in all parts of obedience; he cannot practise chastity and temperance, nor any other virtue, to whose contrary vice his sickness hath utterly disabled him. But what of that? Neither hath the healthful penitent always opportunity to practise every virtue which God enjoins: if he be poor or single, he can no more give alms, or provide for his children, than the sick man can be chaste or temperate; and yet he lives a holy life, I hope, though he hath no occasion or opportunity to practise either of these duties. Why then may not the sick penitent, that practises his duty so far as he hath opportunity; that heartily mourns for his sin, and patiently submits to God's correction; that practises humility and devotion, is charitable in forgiving offences, just in making restitution for injuries; why may not such a one be as well said to live a holy life, when he doth all this out of a hearty subjection of his soul to God, though he should have no opportunity to practise some other virtues? For he who is sincerely resolved to submit to the laws of temperance and chastity, is chaste and temperate, though he never have opportunity to practise them; and all the difference between him and one that lives to practise what he resolves, is only this, that the latter will practise it, and the former would. And in God's account, who sees the issues of all our resolutions, he is as really temperate, who would be so if he had opportunity, as he who is so when he hath: so that though his repentance be not strictly the same with the other's, yet it being to the same purpose, we cannot imagine that the good God will damn him only for a punctilio. If therefore it be not impossible for any death-bed penitent to reduce himself to a firm prevailing

resolution of obeying God, I see no reason to conclude his condition to be absolutely desperate: for being so resolved, he is a holy man, though very imperfectly, I confess; if he go into eternity with that resolution with him, that will dispose him for some degree of happiness. For if his resolution be such as would have prevailed, if he continued in this life, it will as well prevail in the other: and if it so prevail there, as to render him actually obedient, it will by necessary consequence render him in some measure a happy and blessed spirit; obedience to God being as natural a cause of happiness, as the sun is of light, or the fire of heat and burning. All the difficulty therefore is this, not whether God will accept of such a resolution, as whether a death-bed repentance can be so far improved as to rise to such a resolution. And here I must needs confess, and shall hereafter make it evident, that the difficulty of perfecting such a repentance into such a resolution is so exceeding great, that it is the greatest madness in the world for any man to promise himself success beforehand whilst he is in health, and hath so many better opportunities of repentance in his hand. But that it is absolutely impossible, I dare not say, for these following reasons:

1. Because *de facto* we sometimes find that the resolutions of a sick-bed have proved effectual. We know there have been some men, who, in a fit of sickness, when they have looked on themselves as abandoned of all hopes, have yet betaken themselves to serious resolutions; which, when they have recovered to their former health, have visibly proved effectual. I confess, these sick-bed resolutions do most commonly die when the man recovers, and he usu-

ally leaves his bed and his good purposes together: but since there are some instances wherein they have held and proved effectual, that is sufficient to demonstrate the possibility of the thing: for what hath been, may be; and what reason can be given why some men may not perform in eternity what they promised on their death-beds, as well as others do after their recovery what they promised on their sick-beds? As therefore the relapse of most men from their sick-bed purposes proves it extremely hard, so the continuance of others steadfast to them, proves it possible for such purposes to be sincere.

2. Another thing that proves it possible is this; that upon a death-bed ofttimes the arguments of repentance have a more immediate access to the minds of men than at any other time; and, consequently, may be well supposed to be much more effectual and operative. Now the promises and threats of religion will strike more immediately on the soul, the goods and evils which they propose and denounce being nearer at hand, and the soul perceiving herself within the moment of enjoying the one, or suffering the other, for ever; and that thick fog of earthly cares and pleasures that interrupted her prospect into the other world, being in a great measure dispelled and scattered, she lies more open and uncovered to the things of eternity: and therefore, as one thing strikes upon another with a natural effect, as light strikes upon the eye, and sounds upon the ear, so eternal things do upon immortal spirits, when there is nothing between to intercept the stroke, and make most deep and vigorous impressions on them. And when heaven and hell are so near the soul, that she expects almost every moment to expire into the one

on the other, who can tell what strange and sudden alterations they may make in her temper and resolutions? So that though I must confess it is a stupendous effect for a soul to be changed in the short twinkling of a death-bed repentance, yet, when I consider the mighty influence which the arguments of religion may then be reasonably supposed to have upon her, I dare not say it is absolutely impossible; especially considering,

3. And lastly, That how impossible soever it may be to human power, yet it is not impossible to the grace of God. It is true indeed, God ordinarily vouchsafes his grace to men proportionably to their improvement of it; and I confess, if he proceeds by this rule with the dying penitent, he hath less reason to expect God's grace now than in any former period of his life. But yet we see the grace of God doth not always proceed by stated rules and proportions; for sometimes God hath given the largest measures of his grace to those who have made the least improvements of it: sometimes very great sinners have been stopped in their wicked courses, when they least expected it, and turned back by a grace that was almost irresistible: and though this be more ordinary than other miracles are, so that men may as reasonably immure themselves, and depend upon God to feed them by miracle, as put off their repentance to the last, in expectation of having their souls renewed and changed by such a miraculous grace; yet who knows but when the poor dying penitent, under the mighty hopes and fears of eternity, is struggling might and main for his soul, to rescue it from endless misery, who knows, I say, but the good God may sometimes, and in some peculiar cases, take pity upon

him, and by a more than ordinary grace concur with his endeavours, and render them successful. It is, I confess, a sad state, when things are brought to this extremity, that he has nothing but this to depend on; but yet, since the grace of God is not confined to do thus or thus, and no otherwise, but may, when it pleases, transgress the ordinary methods of its procedure, I dare not pronounce the state of those death-bed penitents wholly desperate, who heartily implore the divine assistance, and exert their utmost strength, and use all means within their power to change the wicked temper of their minds. For God may hear and pity them, if he please; and if he will, there is no doubt but his own grace, concurring with their endeavours, can produce this happy effect, how great and difficult soever it may be. All that can be said therefore in the case is this, that an internal change of soul, from a state of disobedience to a state of universal subjection to God, is indispensably necessary to salvation; that such a change is possible to the death-bed penitent, and so consequently is the salvation which depends upon it. But, alas! it is barely possible, so barely possible, that, while I am in my wits, I think I should hardly venture on it for a thousand worlds. Which brings me to,

II. The next thing proposed, which was, to shew you how fearfully hazardous it is, whether a man that begins his religion on his death-bed can actually arrive to that degree of repentance as is necessary to his future happiness. And this will plainly appear, if we consider,

1. The great difficulty of the thing itself.

2. The impotency and indisposition of him that is to perform it.

3. The little reason he hath to expect an extraordinary aid and assistance from God.

1. It is extremely hazardous, because of the great difficulty of the thing itself. We find by experience, that after a long course of sin, it is one of the most difficult things in the world for a man to reduce himself to a thorough resolution of amendment; for custom of sinning begets sinful habits, and sinful habits are a second nature to us. So that for a man to resolve upon a holy life after he hath been long habituated to the contrary, is to resolve to make war with himself, and to live in open hostility with the inclinations of his own nature: and thus to resolve against the grain, and incline himself against his own inclinations, is one of the greatest acts of violence that a man can offer to himself. It is true, in a sudden heat and transport, it is an easy matter for a man to resolve against any thing when he is in a pet against his sins, or his mind is chafed into a religious temper: but these inconsiderate purposes are generally the greatest cheats in the world, for they rarely, if ever, work any alteration in the soul; for though now the man be in a pet against his sins, yet his judgment of them is the same, and that is the principle of his standing resolutions. Men are often angry with their best friends, and while the passion continues, they can easily resolve to discard them for ever; but notwithstanding they do so, yet they are friends still, and love them heartily, though at present they do not perceive it: and as soon as their passion is over, their love will return, and immediately cancel all their resolutions against them. And so it is with those passionate resolutions men make against their sins, which work no change at all in

the standing temper and dispositions of their souls; and are so far from curing them, that they are only the intermissions of their disease; and though at present they are angry with their sins, and do purpose never to be reconciled to them more, yet still they love them heartily, though they perceive it not, and as soon as their passion is over, their love returns, and reverses this purpose; and so these fallings out of lovers end in the renovation of love: so that these rash and hasty resolutions are so far from being hearty submissions unto God, that they only make a truce with him to fetch breath, and recruit for a farther rebellion. And thus to resolve is, I confess, the easiest thing in the world. But for an old sinner to enter into a serious resolution of amendment in the midst of cool and deliberate thoughts, when his sins are about him, entertaining him with fresh remembrances of those dear pleasures they were wont to invite him to; when he is, or supposes himself to be environed with temptation, and importuned on every side with all those soft allurements that are so sweet and grateful to him; this, doubtless, is such a task as will exact his utmost industry and consideration. For now he will meet with such oppositions from his appetites, such shrinkings and recoilings from his will, such strugglings and pullbacks from his darling lusts, as will even distract his soul, and interpose a thousand impediments to hinder him from coming to a thorough resolution. So that unless he be armed with great consideration, animated with invincible courage, and aided by a mighty grace, after all his deliberation he will either not resolve at all, or, which is almost as bad, resolve with reserves and exceptions. Since

therefore to form a hearty and thorough resolution of amendment is so extremely hard and difficult, what a fearful hazard must that man run, that remits it to a dying hour! For how can we hope to accomplish so great a work in so short a time? When we crowd up a duty of so vast a bulk in so narrow a room, in how much danger must it be of being strangled in the birth for want of time and air to breathe in? I dare not say it is absolutely impossible in so short a time to make a thorough change in our temper and resolution; but sure I am, it is so extremely difficult, that it is the greatest hazard in the world whether we actually perform it, especially considering,

2. The great impotency and indisposition of death-bed penitents to perform it. By what hath been said of the difficulty of it, you plainly perceive, that to the performance of it there is required vast industry, great consideration, and earnest strivings and contests with ourselves: but, alas! how unable and unfit is a man for these things, when he lies languishing on a death-bed; when commonly the sickness he languishes under is either such as wholly disables, or extremely weakens and impairs his reason: so that either he is wholly incapable of such reflections and considerations as are necessary to a thorough resolution of amendment, or at least is very unfit for them. Now in this sad extremity, what can the poor wretch do? His sinful soul sits drowsing on the very brinks of a dismal eternity, and death's cold hand is thrusting it headlong down: so that if she doth not presently rouse and start up, and run away from her danger, within a very few moments she will awake in everlasting flames. But, alas!

how should she rouse herself out of those fatal slumbers, when she hath scarce reason enough to reflect upon her danger, or to take any notice of that fearful precipice before her; when by the distemper of her bodily organs she is so stunned and stupified, that she can neither discern where she is, nor whither she is going? But suppose his sickness be such as leaves him in a free use of his reason, yet considering how much he must needs be distracted by pain and uneasiness, by weakness and languishment, by the cares of settling his affairs in this world, and the frightful prospect that he hath of another, it will be impossible for him, without a mighty assistance from above, to range his scattered and unwieldy thoughts into such sober reflections and serious considerations, as are necessary to the forming of a thorough resolution of amendment: for such a resolution can never be formed in a hurry of passion; but must be the result of calm and composed deliberations. For, as I shewed you before, hasty and passionate resolutions work no change upon the soul; and till a man hath made a new judgment of things, it will be in vain for him to make any new resolutions, because it is impossible that any resolution should be lasting that is not founded in the judgment. But what capacity can a man be in to make a new judgment of things in the midst of the incessant hurries and distractions of a death-bed, when he cannot consider a quarter of an hour together, but is interrupted almost every moment by a thousand accidents and avocations? So that to refer our repentance to a death-bed is the same thing as to retire into a battle to meditate, or to set up a closet to study philosophy in the headquarters of an army;

where a man is as capable of free and undisturbed contemplations, as men usually are of forming thorough resolutions of amendment when they are dying; which, without an extraordinary assistance from God, being utterly impossible, must needs be extremely hazardous; considering,

3. And lastly, The little reason such a man hath to expect any extraordinary assistance from God. When a man hath slighted all God's invitations to repentance, and wilfully turned a deaf ear to all the secret whispers and importunities of his blessed Spirit; when he hath all his lifetime rejected the motions and tenders of his grace, upon this resolution, that he would sin on as long as he was able, and never repent till he could sin no longer; with what confidence can he expect that God should vouchsafe him in his dying hour that extraordinary grace which he stands in need of, and without which he must die for ever? For when a man hath been mocking God all his life with the promises of a future repentance, but from time to time hath still delayed and deferred it, till he hath driven it to the last extremity, so that now he must repent or be damned, perhaps the next moment; with what face can he implore such an extraordinary favour from that God with whom he hath so wretchedly prevaricated? For unless we suppose God to be a being that loves to be provoked, one that is taken with affronts and injuries, and consequently that measures his favours to us by the degrees and number of our rebellions against him, we cannot reasonably expect that he should be then most kind to us, when we have offended him as much as we are able, and would never be persuaded to repent of our wickedness, till

we are able to offend him no more. I desire to have as large apprehensions of the mercy of God as can be reasonably admitted; but withal I am assured he is the hardest to be imposed upon of any one in the world; and being so, it cannot well be expected, that when, in despite of his authority and frequent invitations to repentance, the sinner hath squandered away all his strength and vigour in a course of wickedness, God should be so indulgent to him on his death-bed, as to supply that strength which he hath spent in sinning against him, by the extraordinary assistances of his own grace; especially considering how often he hath declared his resolution of dispensing his grace to us in greater or lesser proportions, according to the improvements we make of it. So James iv. 6, 7, 8. *For the scripture offereth more grace; and therefore saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore unto God. Resist the Devil, and he will fly from you. Draw near unto God, and he will draw near unto you.* And thus more expressly in the parable of the talents, Matt. xxv. 29. *For unto every one that hath,* that is, improves what he hath, *shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not,* i. e. improves not what he hath, *shall be taken away, even that which he hath.* God therefore having thus declared that he will lessen or augment his grace proportionably as we abuse or improve it, we may reasonably expect, that the oftener we do repulse its motions, the weaker will be its attempts upon us; and so weaker and weaker, till it is wholly withdrawn, and hath given us up for desperate and irreclaimable: and consequently, if God proceed in this

method, as doubtless he most ordinarily doth, then the longer a man continues in sin, the more he is abandoned of the grace of God. So that when the sinner is arrived to his death-bed, he may reasonably expect, that if God's assistance be not wholly withdrawn, and lessened into nothing, as he may justly fear it will, yet it will be much less vigorous and powerful than in any former period of his life; and if it be, his condition is next to desperate: for if his soul be not renewed and changed within a few moments, it is ruined beyond all recovery. And since to effect this change is a work of mighty difficulty, what but a mighty grace can enable the dying penitent, in so short a time, and with so small a strength, to perform it? So that the sum of all is this: though the condition of him that remits his repentance to a death-bed be not absolutely desperate, yet it is so hazardous, that nothing on this side hell can be more wretched and deplorable: and therefore for men to put off their repentance to the last, and venture their souls upon so great an uncertainty, is a piece of the most desperate folly and madness. I confess, when a man hath been so desperate and cruel to himself, as to run himself upon this fearful venture, I would by no means discourage his repentance, but rather use all means to invite and persuade him to it: for repentance is always the best thing we can do; and when a man hath been so desperately besotted as to defer it to a death-bed, and put himself upon this woful extremity, this is the last remedy he can apply, and the best refuge he hath to fly to. But so long as men are well and in health, and have a fair space of repentance in their hands, I would not for all the

world encourage them to run such a desperate hazard: for next to leaping headlong into hell without any repentance at all, doubtless the most desperate folly a man can be guilty of, is to defer his repentance till he is dying. And so I pass on to

III. The third and last thing proposed; which was, to shew you, that supposing our death-bed penitent should repent effectually, yet how impossible it is for him in an ordinary way to attain any comfortable assurance of it. And indeed, considering how many cheats and frauds there are under most of our resolutions of amendment, it is at least extremely difficult for us to be any otherwise secure of them, than by their effects and performances. As for the dying penitent therefore, that doth not long enough survive his resolution to see the execution of it, how can he be secure that it is sincere and perfect; especially considering that the circumstances in which he makes it are such as do conspire to render it extremely suspicious? For,

1. He makes it under the fear of death.
2. In the absence of temptation.
3. Under a great agony of conscience.
4. In the near neighbourhood of eternity.

1. He makes his resolution under a mighty fear of death, which gives him great reason to suspect it. We daily see how much our humours change and vary upon every remove out of one condition into another; and how these do cast the balance of our superior soul, and make us every day so many several sorts of men. Every wind almost turns our mind towards a new point; and, like water, we take the form of every vessel we are put into. So that we have great reason to suspect that our death-bed re-

pentance is not so much the mould of our minds, as of the condition we are put into; and that were we poured back again into a healthful condition, we should immediately lose our present shape, and return into our former figure again. For when men see their life is in God's hand, and that he is ready to cut it in sunder, it is no wonder at all, if they do what they can to bribe him to spare them a little longer, and consequently, if they resolve well, and make fair promises of future obedience; which is the best thing they can do in this extremity. But if their resolution be founded in the fear of death, its foundation is contrary to its performance; the motive of their resolution to live well for the future being a presumption that they shall live no longer: and it will be an act of reason and justice to themselves, to stick to their resolution, when the motive of it is changed; and on the contrary, of imprudence and unkindness, to forsake the conclusion, when the premises are consulted. So that upon such grounds as these, what can be expected, but that this sick sesolver will resume his sins with his health, if he should recover, and leave his new vows in that bed where he first took them up, and discharge his fears and his good actions, his physician and his confessor together. It being so, how is it possible he should be assured that his resolution is sincere, unless he recover and perform it?

2. He makes his resolution in the absence of temptation; which gives him also great reason to suspect it. For now the seasons of the pleasures of sin are over, he cannot relish their delights, because his cloyed appetite distastes them, as the full stomach doth the honeycomb: and his soul being now

uninterested in all sinful pleasure, and being naturally in continual motion, must necessarily divert the current of its action some other way; and the future state to which it is so nearly allied being all it hath to work upon, it is no wonder if the freedom of its motion turn thitherwards, being diverted out of its old channel: for if he love his sins or the world never so well, he must leave them, whether he will or no; if he dislike God and his holiness, and an everlasting abode with him never so much, he is forced upon them, or dashed upon eternal misery, which it is impossible for him to choose. So that now his good resolution is scarce an act of choice: for though he would not choose to obey God, if he could still enjoy his former lusts, yet they being out of his reach, he must take what is to be had. So that it is mighty suspicious, that the sense of his resolution is no more than this: holiness is good when a man is just dying; but while he lives, and can enjoy his lusts, they are a great deal better. So that the approach of death makes holiness good to him upon this account only; because there would be something worse, and there can no longer be any thing better: and it is to be feared he esteems it good, only in comparison with hell, which without it will inevitably follow. And when it thus purchases the reputation of being good, from the near approach of such a mighty evil, it is not so much esteemed a good, as a lesser evil; which argues, that the man's judgment is not at all altered: for still he looks on holiness as an evil; and in choosing it before hell, he only chooses of two evils the least, and it is extremely suspicious, that he would no more have chosen it now, than he did while he was well and in health;

but that it stands at present out of the air of temptation, and is presented to him without the counterpoise of those sinful delights, for whose sake he formerly rejected it. For there are many apprehensions which make deep impressions, not only on our brain and fancies, but on our affections too, whilst these are calm and unprovoked; which impressions notwithstanding quickly vanish upon the starting of new objects, and the provocations of contrary fancies and affections by them: so that it is impossible to be certain what those good resolutions will come to, which a man makes when he hath no temptation to the contrary. The utmost therefore that can be said of them is this, they may be sincere, and they may hold out; but there is an infinite hazard in them: they are easily made; because at present there is no temptation against them, no vicious appetite strong enough to control them; but there is vast reason to fear, that should the man recover, and his appetites return again upon him, the next temptation would betray him, and make him surrender up all his resolution; and consequently, if he die before he hath made a trial of himself, his condition must needs be extremely uncertain, his hope must sit upon the brinks of despair, and his soul go trembling into eternity, to think what a hazard it is now a running.

3. He resolves under the horrors and agonies of an awakened conscience; and this also renders his resolution extremely suspicious. And indeed that man must be in a dead sleep, that will not awake when death is sounding the trumpet of judgment in his ears, and calling him instantly away to give up his unprepared accounts. For though when judg-

ment seems to us at the other end of heaven, all is quiet; yet certainly, when death brings us to the very seat of it, the awe of that dreadful tribunal of which we are now in sight, and the sense, of so many guilts staring us in the face, of which we must the next moment acquit ourselves, or die for ever, must necessarily shake our sleepy consciences into unspeakable horrors and agonies, and make us infinitely solicitous to fly from the wrath that is to come. And in this distress, being conscious to himself that the best thing he can do is to resolve upon amendment for the future; here he puts in for sanctuary, having no other hold to hide his guilty head. So that now to resolve well is hardly an act of choice; and it is much to be feared, that it is only an expedient snatched up for the present extremity: and though now he be very serious, yet that perhaps is only the effect of a sudden cast of melancholy on his thoughts; and if it be, when that removes, his thoughts will be quite of another colour; or if it be the result of a more thorough conviction, yet is it very probable that may go off too when the man's circumstances are altered; that when the present tragic scene is removed out of sight, and the alarm of his approaching judgment sounds no longer in his ears, he will presently let fall those resolutions again, which he took up only as a shield against his conscience. And this being so uncertain, what a fearful hazard must that man run, that depends upon such resolutions, and embarks his soul into eternity in them? For, though it is possible they may be sincere, yet it is highly probable that they are not; but as they were raised only by a storm of horror, so if that were laid, they would fall again; and if they should be false

and hypocritical, as God only knows whether they are or no, the poor man is certainly lost and undone for ever.

4. And lastly, He resolves in the near neighbourhood of eternity; which also renders his resolution very suspicious. For the soul is never more sensible of eternity, than when it is walking on the confines of it: for the very loosing it from the body wherein it dwells, and in which its motions are all confined, doth many times give her some lesser degree of those advantages which free and naked spirits have, that are not imprisoned in flesh. For the less the soul is found to work by the body, the higher are its operations; all her extraordinary motions are a kind of ravishment from sense. It is therefore very probable, that when the soul is leaving the body, it hath naturally a more sensible touch and feeling of its eternal state; because the nearer any thing is to its residence, the more vehement is its motion thither; and consequently, the nearer the soul is to its eternal abode, the more quick and vigorous may we reasonably suppose its motions thither: so that when the other world is in view, and it is just upon the region of spirits, it is no wonder if the sense of her approaching everlasting fate put her into great tremblings and agonies. For now there is nothing between her and eternity to intercept her prospect of it; no sinful pleasures or delights to interrupt her thoughts of it, or deaden the force of its impressions: so that if in this state of things she should not resolve to throw off her sins, and embrace virtue, when she is in view of that hell of endless miseries to which those tend, and of that heaven of joys to which this aspires, it would be prodigious. But whether this

resolution will hold, when heaven and hell are vanished out of sight again, it is a mighty hazard; and sadly probable it is, that if the man recover from the brinks of eternity, and get further off it, he will soon forget his good resolutions, and leave all his piety behind him. For when he resolved, alas! he was sick and dying, leaving this world, and launching into another: but when he is well again, the case will be altered; this world will be present to him, and the other a great way off; and when his resolution is thus abandoned of the motive that animated and held it together, there is infinite reason to suspect, that it will immediately languish and expire. So that the sum of all is this: the death-bed penitent may possibly repent sincerely; but it is an infinite hazard whether he will or no: and if he doth, it is ordinarily impossible for him to have any comfortable insurance of it. I will not deny, but in some rare and extraordinary cases, to serve some excellent end, God may immediately suggest comfort to him, and give him joy of his repentance; but whether ever he doth or will do so, or no, is more than I am able to determine. For this I am sure of, he hath no where obliged himself to it; and what he hath not promised, we have no reason to expect. For whatsoever is extraordinary, is more than what is promised; but the ordinary comforts of dejected penitents are such as arise from an inward sense of their own sincerity, and of the glorious hopes to which that entitles them. But as for the sincerity of the death-bed penitent, it is so indiscernible, by reason of suspicious circumstances, that without an immediate revelation it is hardly possible to be perceived; and from any promise that God hath made, there is not the least an-

couragement to hope for any such immediate revelation. So that if any such comfort be vouchsafed to him, it is doubtless very rarely; because it is extraordinary. I know there is nothing more common, than for men that never repented till they came to die, to die very comfortably: but, alas! I am horribly afraid, that generally their comforts are nothing but the effects either of their stupidity or their disease; or else the consequence of very false and dangerous principles.

First, Many times it is plainly the effect of their wretched stupidity and sottishness. For some men we see are so stupid in their sins, that nothing but hell-flames will awake them: and though, when they feel themselves upon the edge of eternity, passing into an irrecoverable condition, they cannot forbear reflecting on their sins, and starting at the dangerous consequence of them; yet if they can but so far obtain of themselves, as to weep for and resolve against them, they think that all is well again, and so go into eternity with a great deal of comfort and assurance. But these are a sort of stupid souls that have no regard to themselves; that are dying for ever, but have not sense enough to apprehend their danger, or to feel the disease of which they are dying: for if they had, they would never be so confident of their recovery upon such slight and easy applications; they would consider how false and hypocritical all their former resolutions have proved, and how much cause there is to suspect, lest those should prove as bad as they, and how impossible it is to impose upon God, to whose all-seeing eye the inmost nature and utmost issues of things are open and naked: which would necessarily render them extremely jealous and

solicitous concerning their eternal state. I am now going away into everlasting weal or woe; Lord, what will become of me! The only security I have, that it will go well with me for ever, is only this, that I am resolved upon a future amendment: but, alas! I have too much reason to suspect my resolution is rotten at the core; and if it be, woe be to me that ever I was born. This, without all doubt, would be his language, if he were but throughly awakened into a sense of his danger; which, because he is not, he dies in a dream of happiness, and will presently awake in real and intolerable misery. And as this comfort of the death-bed penitent doth oftentimes arise from his stupidity, so,

Secondly, Many times it is nothing else but the mere effect of his disease. For there are many diseases that have a natural enthusiasm attending them, viz. such as alternately chill and freeze the blood, and put the spirits into unequal motions; and to such as these, dejections and transports do as naturally follow, as shiverings and burnings to an ague. For when the blood runs low, and the spirits are weak and languid, then usually the scene is all tragedy; melancholy vapours cloud and overwhelm their fancies, and they are lost in a wood of spiritual desertions. But when the tide turns, and warmer blood flows up into the brain, and refreshes the drooping fancy with brisk and active spirits, then they are full of raptures and ecstasies; which, because they look on as streaming from an heavenly original, they labour to swell and heighten to the utmost brink of their capacities, insomuch that sometimes they are stifled and overwhelmed with joy; and it is usual for them, especially in high fevers, when their blood

is more briskly fermented by the sharpness of their humours, to chafe and tickle themselves into real trances and deliriums; which they, not understanding the structure of their own bodies, and the nature of their disease, do commonly mistake for the immediate sealings and incomes of the Spirit of God. So that if they chance to die in one of these transports, those that are spectators of their end conclude that they depart in full assurance, and are most infallibly received into the joy of their Master: whereas most commonly, I fear, their joy expires with them, and leaves them desperate and miserable. But then,

Thirdly, In the third and last place, their comfort is many times nothing else but the effect and consequence of their own false and dangerous principles. They have entertained such principles as these; that their own personal righteousness is not at all necessary to render them acceptable to God, and that all is required of them is, to rest and rely upon Jesus Christ; which if they do, all their defects and miscarriages shall be most certainly covered with the robe of his righteousness, and God will look upon them, and deal with them as if they had been as righteous as he. That men have imbibed such principles as these, and learned to practise on them, we, who converse with sick-beds, cannot be ignorant: for when they have gone on impenitently to their death-beds, and we come to inquire into the grounds of their hopes, this we find is the ordinary refuge they fly to, that Jesus Christ hath obeyed and suffered for them; and therefore they firmly rely upon him, and fling their souls into his arms, and make no doubt but he will catch them, and save them

from the wrath to come: as if the design of our Saviour's undertaking had been to privilege those who believe in him, to live wickedly and die comfortably. That he, by his merit and satisfaction, hath obtained this grant of his Father, that all who heartily submit themselves unto him shall be received into his favour, notwithstanding their past rebellions and present imperfections of obedience, I think an undoubted principle of Christianity: but that he hath obtained this favour for us absolutely, whether we submit to his Father or no, is so far from being Christian, that I think it is one of the most Antichristian doctrines that was ever set on broach in the world; for it plainly defeats the main design of Christianity, and totally dissolves all its obligations. For whereas the principal drift of Christianity is to teach men *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*; this doctrine unteaches all again, and gives men a dispensation to live as wickedly as they please. For if upon my reliance upon Christ I shall be received into God's favour, whether I submit to him or no, farewell to all obligations of obedience. What need men be solicitous of making such hearty submissions of their souls to God, if the Saviour be a sanctuary from the authority of his laws? So that for men to rely confidently upon Christ, before they are secure that their souls are heartily subjected to him, is a piece of the greatest arrogance and presumption: and though they may pacify their conscience with it when they are dying, yet when they are dead they will find they have made more bold than welcome with their Saviour; that he will not be a patron to their sins, nor side with

them so far in their rebellions against his Father, as to shelter them in his wounds from the due vengeance of eternal fire. Although therefore these death-bed penitents do too often die very comfortably, yet considering what false grounds their comforts generally stand on, I had much rather see them go down to their graves in the greatest sorrow and anxiety of soul: for if they should miscarry, as there is vast reason to fear they will, it grieves my soul to think what a surprise they will be in; how they will be blanked and amazed, when, contrary to their bold presumptions of waking in immortal joys, they find themselves among devils and damned ghosts, abandoned to endless misery and despair. And indeed I cannot but wonder, that a man who hath deferred his repentance to a death-bed should have the confidence to talk of comfort and assurance; which is such a reward as God usually appropriates to long and most eminent piety. But for a man that hath rebelled against God all his days, to perk up presently after a few sighs and submissions, and pretend to as much assurance of his Saviour as if he had been his ancient friend and familiar, is downright inexcusable impudence. Alas, poor man! what less canst thou do in modesty, than spend the small remainder of thy days in sighs, and tears, and deep humiliations; and when thou hast done thy utmost, to content thyself with this, thou art not altogether desperate? But as for comfort and assurance, it would well become thee to leave them to those who have better deserved them: for, after all thou canst do, if thou gettest to heaven, it will be a wonder of mercy: so that unless thou art absolutely besotted, thou must die in great fear, and go trembling away into

eternity. So miserable is the state of the death-bed penitent, that it is a mighty hazard whether ever he repent to purpose; and if he doth, it is ordinarily impossible to reap any comfortable assurance of it.

And now I expect that it will be objected against this discourse, that it savours of too much rigour and severity, because it represents the state of dying penitents so very near to desperate. To which I briefly answer, that if it were absolutely desperate, as I confess I think it very near so, yet doubtless the best way is to represent things as they are: for the nature of the thing is already fixed, and neither your opinion nor mine will alter it. Indeed, if I could recover a dying man, by telling him that he is not dying, it would be cruelty in me to pronounce him past recovery: and so, could I save the dying penitent by telling him that he is secure, I was very much to blame should I say his case is desperate. But, alas! if it be so, it will be so, let me say what I please: so that in pronouncing that it is so, I only make him sensible of it a few moments sooner. I do but shew him what he must trust to, and what he will presently be convinced of by woful experience; and by ringing out a passing-bell to his departing soul, I do him this kindness at least, that he will not be in hell before he is aware of it.

And certainly this is some charity, though it be severe. But yet neither do I represent the case to be altogether desperate, though I must confess some very great and eminent divines have done so: for I have endeavoured to shew, that true repentance is not impossible on a death-bed, though extremely hazardous and difficult; so that still there is some hope, enough to encourage the sinner's utmost en-

deavour, and keep his head above water; and for him to give up himself to despair, while there is any glimmering hope, is to enter into hell before his time; which is a degree of imprudence next to that he hath been already guilty of, in putting himself upon this dismal extremity. But supposing it had been represented as wholly desperate; yet this can occasion no man that hears me to despair, unless it be through his own default. For, God be praised, I am not now preaching to a sick or dying auditory: you are now well and in health, and have a space and season of repentance before you; which if you will but diligently improve, you prevent the fearful hazard whereunto a death-bed penitence exposes you. But if through your own neglect you should fall into it, and despair in it, who can you blame but yourselves for it? All that I aim at is to prevent your danger, by persuading you to repent betime: but if you will be so cruel to yourselves as to delay it till it is too late, and then despair overtake you, you may thank yourselves for it, that would take no warning. And therefore, to render this argument yet more effectual, I intend to represent to you the folly and wickedness of deferring our repentance to the last, and thereby to excite and provoke you to a speedy resolution of amendment; that so, when the Bridegroom comes, you may not, with these foolish virgins in my text, find the door of heaven shut against you; but that, having finished your work, you may be *admitted* with *that good and profitable servant into the joy of your Master.*

DISCOURSE V.

UPON

REVELATIONS II. 21.

I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

THE person here spoken of is Jezebel, as you may see in the foregoing verse: but who this Jezebel was, is very much disputed by expositors. Epiphanius, and some that follow him, refer this title to those women heretics, Priscilla, Maximilla, and Quintilla, who followed Montanus, and about Commodus his reign took upon them to be prophetesses, and under that pretence propagated many monstrous heresies. But since it must be after St. John's time that those women were in the church of Thyatira; and since St. John here speaks not prophetically of what should be, but historically of what already was, is it [not] supposable that these Montanist women should be the Jezebel here spoken of? Besides that, the character here given her doth not agree with that sect; for these Montanists were a very severe and strict sect, and that was the main motive which seduced Tertullian to it: whereas this Jezebel, or sect described by her name, is here accused of fornication and sacrificing to idols. So that it seems more probable, that by *her* is meant either the whole sect of the Gnostics, which, as all agree, was infamous for lewdness, uncleanness, and idolatry; or else some particular woman, who was an eminent patroness and ringleader of that party. And if he mean this latter, as it

seems most probable, by the distinction he makes between her and those that committed adultery with her, that is, her followers, then it is probable that he means Helena, the whore of Simon Magus, who was father of the Gnostics, whom he styled his πρώτη ἔννοια, or *first conception*. And well might she be called Jezebel, since she so much resembled the wife of Ahab, called by that name, in her notorious whoredoms and idolatries: but yet in her he reprehends the whole sect, which was all involved with her in the same impenitence. So that it was equally true, both of her and her followers, that God *gave them space to repent of their fornications, and they repented not:* that is, God's patience waited on them, and gave them time to reform their lewd and infamous practices; but still they deferred and put it off, and, under all this forbearance, continued obstinate and impenitent. So that the design of the words is to represent the evil of men's putting off their repentance, when God in mercy forbears them, and gives them space enough to perform it. And how great an evil this is, I shall endeavour to represent to you,

I. By shewing you the wickedness;

II. The absurdity; and,

III. The danger of it.

I. I shall shew you the wickedness of it, and that in these following particulars:

1. It is a profane mockery of God's patience.
2. It is an ungrateful undervaluing of his service.
3. It is an open contempt to his authority.
4. It is an impious presumption on his goodness.
5. It is an arrogant defiance of his displeasure.

1. To defer and put off our repentance, when God

gives us space to repent, is a profane mockery of his patience. That he did not strike us dead upon our first sin, and consign us immediately to the chains of darkness, was purely the effect of his goodness. It was this that obliged him to try us a little longer, in hope that at last we might be prevailed with to consider our danger, and correct our folly, before it had determined us to an irreversible ruin. Whilst therefore we linger out the space of our repentance in delays, we sport and dally with the patience of God; we promise fair, and give it hope that it shall at last obtain its ends upon us; but when we come to performance, we baffle and disappoint it, and render all its past attendance ineffectual. For when the date of our former promise is expired, and God expects our performance, instead of that, we only give him new promises, and pay him with words instead of things; as if by our promises we only intended to raise in him an expectation of our repentance, that so we might have an opportunity to vex him with a disappointment. We promise we will repent hereafter, only to get leave to sin for the present; and so when that hereafter comes, we promise again, and only repeat the old delusion: as if we meant to tantalize his patience by proffering the golden fruit of our repentance, and snatching it away again, before he can lay hold of it. Now what a fearful wickedness is this, for men to put such tricks upon the Almighty, still to defer the payment of a debt that hath been so long due and so often demanded, and still to pay his demands with promises, and only feed his expectations with air! As though we thought him bound to attend our leisure, and to give us credit to run deeper on score, upon the security of our

promise of future payment, which we have already forfeited over and over.

2. Thus to put off and delay our repentance is a most base and ungrateful undervaluing of his service: for the reason why we delay our repentance, is because we think it will be time enough to return to our duty hereafter, when the opportunities of sin are gone, and the pleasure of it is out of season. For into what other sense can God construe our delays but only this, that it is our design to shift off him and his service till we have served our lusts as long as we are able, and never to begin our repentance till we are able to be wicked no longer? Now, I beseech you, could you, without horror and trembling, make such an address to God as this? "O God, I know it is my duty, and the very end of "my life, to serve thee: but, I beseech thee, be not "angry, if, while I live, I serve my lusts, and employ "the powers thou hast given me, in rebellion against "thee: and, if thou wilt but indulge me this, I will "be thy humble servant when I am good for no-"thing, neither to serve nor disobey thee: do but "have patience till I am bedrid, and can enjoy the "world and my lusts no longer, and then I will re-"turn to thee, and be sorry for my sins, and wish "that I had never offended thee. I would now de-"vote the service of my youth and strength to thee, "but that I am sensible it is too good for thee: and "therefore, come what will, I will feed my lusts with "the marrow of my days, and if the dull insipid "bone will content thee, it is at thy service." This, though it be horrible language, is yet the natural sense of our delays. We would repent immediately, but that we think it is a thousand pities such fair

opportunities of sinning should be lost, and so many precious minutes should be so ill bestowed: so that the reason of our delay is this; that at present we apprehend we can spend our time more pleasantly in sinning on, than in the exercise of a severe repentance; and consequently, while we can still sin on with pleasure, we shall still have the same reason to delay, and never think it reasonable to begin our repentance, till we are old, decrepit, or dying, and can sin with pleasure no longer. Now what a profane reflection is it upon God and his service, to think ourselves too good to serve him, till we are good for nothing! that the dregs and lees of our life are good enough for him, and that he ought to be satisfied with the leavings of our lusts, and to take it as a favour that we will repent of our sins when we are no longer capable of sinning with pleasure! With what patience can he endure to be thus slighted and contemned by us, to be thus rudely put off with the refuse of our lusts, thus unmannerly treated with the scraps of the Devil's table?

3. To defer our repentance, when God gives us space to repent, is an open contempt of his authority: for, by the laws of religion, we are bound either always to continue innocent, or, when we have contracted guilt, to expiate it by immediate repentance: for so long as we continue under any guilty impenitence, we are in a state of actual rebellion against God, and are not only accountable for the guilt of the first sin, but also for that of not having repented of it. And though we do not repeat the first sin any more, yet our very continuing impenitent under the guilt of it brings a distinct guilt upon us, and renders us doubly criminal in the sight of God: for un-

less our sinning against God doth cancel the obligation of his laws, they must necessarily oblige us to repent; that is, to revoke our wicked purpose, and return to our obedience, as soon as ever we have broken and transgressed it. It is true indeed, as for particular affirmative precepts, they being always relative to time, and place, and persons, are to be practised only in special times and pertinent occasions; because they, being but parts of a good life, must give way by turns for other parts and instances of it, which are of the like particular and limited nature with themselves; but yet we are always obliged to the purpose and disposition of practising these, whensoever occasion doth require it. A man is not always bound to be doing justice, by giving alms or saying his prayers; but to the devotion of prayer, or the disposition of justice, and the charity of alms, he is continually obliged: these being works of the inward man, cannot be limited to times and opportunities, nor receive any accidental determinations from without, but are always possible, and always good, and always necessary: for the performance of them depends only on the grace of God and the will of man, and that never fails if this doth not; and therefore is always possible, unless we will not; but it is always necessary, whether we will or no. So that when we have broken our purpose of obeying God by any actual sin, it is another distinct sin not to renew it by immediate repentance; and when, by this actual sin, we have lost our disposition to obey God, and contracted the contrary, there is in this a proper guilt and venom distinct from that actual sin that introduced it. But then there are general precepts of religion, such as to love God, and to repent from

dead works; the first of which includes the whole religion of a man; the second, the whole religion of a sinner; and consequently, we being both, must needs be universally obliged to both these duties, in all accidents, times, and cases. For when once we have apostatized from our duty, all our after-obedience is an act of repentance; and therefore, though the command of it be affirmative, yet because it is universal, including all those duties, which, by binding at several times, do fill up all our time, there can be no time in which we are not bound to repent. This I have the longer insisted on, because it is a great question among the Roman casuists, whether a man be always bound to this duty; and some of them have been so wicked as to determine, that a man is not bound to repent till he comes to die; others, that it is sufficient if he repent once a year; others, thrice, upon the three great holydays of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday: as if there were any time wherein it were not our duty to return to our duty, or the laws of our religion did only oblige us at certain seasons, and in the intervals gave us a free dispensation to live as wickedly as we pleased. Since, therefore, as soon as we have sinned, we are bound immediately to repent, it necessarily follows, that he who sins, and then delays his repentance, sins twice; his very delay being a further provocation. For how can we imagine, that he who persists in rebellion against God twenty years together, doth not much more offend him than he who submits within twenty months, or twenty days, or twenty hours? and if the longer we persist, the more we do offend him, then every delay of our repentance must needs be a further provocation. The sum

of all therefore is this: that every day God calls us to repentance, and that every call of his ought to be regarded; and consequently, that every regardless delay of it adds to the heap of our guilt, and helps to fill up the measure of our iniquities. And what a rude contempt is it of God's authority, when he commands us to repent to-day, to cry, Well, we will repent to-morrow! "Lord, we beseech thee, be not "so hasty with us, suffer us to offend thee yet a lit-"tle longer: for whether thou wilt or no, we are re-"solved to do it. We will repent; but will not be "prescribed when; as for that, leave it to us: for "say what thou wilt, we are fully resolved to take "leave to do it when we please." This, in effect, is the impious meaning of every delay of our repentance; and when God commands us to repent, we might as modestly tell him, that we will not repent at all, as when he commands us to repent now, tell him, that we will repent hereafter.

4. To defer our repentance when God giveth us space to repent is an impious presumption on his goodness. The reason why God forbears us when we sin, is to give us second thoughts, and to see our danger, and to run away from it; that so he may not surprise us into ruin: for the end of his long-suffering is to lead us to repentance; but when upon this consideration we take encouragement to delay, we do not only defeat his goodness, but, so far as in us lies, render it injurious to him. For we war against him under the protection of his kindness to us; and fortify ourselves in our rebellion, in that very goodness and long-suffering with which he seeks to conquer and subdue us. O barbarous ingra-

titude! That we should fetch arguments from his mercy to offend him, and maintain enmity against him out of the revenue of his own indulgence! Would you not look on that malefactor as a monster, that should rob his judge merely because he reprieved him; and use him with all the despite and ignominy, because he knew him to be a merciful man, and will be loath to hang him the next sessions? And is it not altogether as monstrous for us to abuse God, because he is kind to us; and to take encouragement to rob him of our duty, because we know he is unwilling to ruin us? But though every man hath not impudence enough to assign this reason, yet it is plain this lies at the bottom of all their delays: *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*, saith the Wise Man, *therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*, Eccles. viii. 11. But what horrid baseness is this, to urge his goodness against himself; and fetch motives from his mercy, to affront his authority? It seems, if he were worse to us, we would be better to him; and if he were less kind, we would be more dutiful. O wretches that we are! I had almost said, it is even pity that we have a God to deal with, that we are not under the government of some fury, that would watch for our halting, and catch at all opportunities to plague and punish us: and we were best have a care we do not presume too much upon God; for though he bears long, he will not bear always; and there is nothing can sooner provoke him, than to see us conduct our rebellions against him under the banners of his own goodness. This is such an intolerable provocation, as is sufficient to enrage a soul of patience, and

turn the most boundless mercy into fury: and if once his wrath be kindled against us, he will make us rue for ever in our abuses of his goodness.

V. And lastly, To defer our repentance, when God gives us space for it, is an arrogant defiance of his displeasure: for God hath sufficiently declared to us the displeasure he takes in the delays of our repentance. Thus in his holy word he hath given us fair warning of it: thus Rom. ii. 4. *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* From whence I argue, 1. That the goodness of God is a motive to repentance. 2. That not to be persuaded by it is to despise his goodness. 3. That this despising his goodness, by delaying our repentance, *is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.* So also Rev. ii. 5. *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.* Where he plainly declares, that if our repentance be not very quickly, his judgments will be too quick for us: by which he plainly signifies, how much he is displeased with our delays, how importunately they urge and provoke him to overwhelm us with a speedy destruction. And accordingly we see by experience, how he takes some away in their early sins, and gives them no respite; and he who hath made it damnation to some for not repenting instantly, hath made it damnable to all. The earth doth not open and swallow up all rebels in the day of their mutiny; but it did so once; and thereby God hath sufficiently signified to all ages his displeasure against rebellion: and so it is in de-

ferring repentance; for that some have smarted for it eternally, is a sufficient manifestation that God is displeased with every one that defers it. Whilst therefore we delay our repentance from time to time, we sit down quietly under the divine displeasure; as if it were altogether indifferent whether the Almighty be pleased or displeased with us; we do as good as say, "Lord, we know well enough, thou "wouldst have us repent immediately, and that if "we do not, thou wilt be angry with us; but be thou "never so angry, we will not repent as yet, we must "enjoy our lusts a little longer, and if thou wilt be "displeased, we will run the venture. We had ra-"ther endure thy frowns a while, than part with our "sins for ever; and think it much more tolerable to "be hated by the Fountain of all love and goodness, "than abandoned of all our sinful pleasures." This is such language, perhaps, as the boldest sinner would hardly be able to pronounce without trembling; but yet, such as it is, it is the natural sense of every man's actions, who delays and puts off his repentance: he knows that God is displeased with him, but regards it not; and, as if he were ambitious of being a hero in wickedness, he defies Heaven, and dallies with its thunderbolts, and runs into the mouth of its cannon, whilst they are spitting fire, and roaring out destruction upon him.

And thus you see the monstrous wickedness of men's delaying their repentance, which is such as, had we not seared our consciences, and stifled our natural sense of God, we could never be able to reflect on without horror and agonies. And so I pass to the

Second head of discourse, the great absurdity of

delaying our repentance; which I shall endeavour to demonstrate in these following particulars:

1. It is putting off a work that must be done, to the most unfitting season of doing it.

2. It is putting it off upon no other reason, but what will hereafter be more prevalent than now.

3. It deprives us of the satisfaction of having done what we must do at last, and prolongs the pain and trouble of doing it.

4. It defers the doing it, upon no other presumption, but that it shall one day dearly repent of its own neglect.

1. To delay our repentance, is to put off a work that must be done, to the most unfitting season of doing it. That repentance is indispensably necessary to the recovery and happiness of a sinner, is a principle wherein all the reasonable world are agreed: and since it must be done, it is highly reasonable we should take the best opportunity of doing it: and for a man to say, I must do such a thing, and am resolved to do it, but however I will take the most improper season to do it in, is the most absurd and ridiculous thing in the world. But for a man to repent in, there is no season can be so convenient as the present: for it will never be so easy for us to repent as now; the difficulty of it will daily grow upon our hands; and if we do not engage in it immediately, it will be harder to-morrow than it is to-day. When men begin to sin, their nature starts and boggles at it, from an innate sense of God and of their duty; and this natural shiness must be tamed and broken, ere they can be thoroughpaced in wickedness: but when they have inured themselves to it by frequent acts, they grow by degrees familiar with it,

and then every act breeds delight in it, and every delight begets a desire of repeating it, and that desire brings forth a new act. And when a man hath walked the rounds a while in this circle, at last he centres in custom and habit of sinning, and then every new act will confirm the habit, and root it deeper in our natures; and so, as we sin on, it will grow stronger and stronger, till at last it becomes almost fatal and necessary, and then, the Lord have mercy upon us! for without a miracle of grace we shall never be able to retrieve ourselves. Thus every step we take in our sinful progress leads us further out of the way, and renders our return home more hard and difficult: so that by going on in a sinful course, we do what in us lies to block up the way of our return; and do as it were build a wall behind us, to disable ourselves from making any retreat. What a ridiculous thing therefore is it, for men to pretend that they will repent, but not yet; when it is so apparent, that if they repent not now, it will never be so easy again, as long as they live! To-morrow it will be more difficult than now; and every day it is delayed will drive it nearer to an impossibility. So that by our foolish delays we do but make work for ourselves, and heap up difficulties on our own heads: we resolve that we will repent; but withal that we will not go about it till we have rendered it more difficult, and ourselves less able to do it. Our soul is wounded, and must die, without the sovereign balsam of repentance; which we therefore resolve to apply, and make use of: but first her wound shall fester into a gangrene, not to be cured but by the most painful lancings and corrosives. And can there be any thing more ridiculous, than for a man

to resolve to do a thing, and at the same time resolve to make it more difficult before he doth it? For certainly, if our repentance, after so many delays, should at last commence, which is very questionable, it will in all probability be accompanied with so many sad circumstances, so many tumults of passion and uproars of conscience, so many piercing sorrows and bitter agonies, that we shall dearly repent we did not repent sooner.

2. To delay our repentance is to resolve to defer this work to hereafter, upon a reason which will then be much more prevalent than now: and for a man to defer a thing to hereafter, which he resolves to do, upon such a reason as will be much more prevalent hereafter than now, is doubtless the absurdest thing in the world. Now the main reason why men are now unwilling to repent is, because they love their sins, and are unwilling to part with them, and in all likelihood hereafter they will be much more unwilling: so that this reason will every day improve upon their hands, and have so much the more strength, by how much the longer they defer their repentance. So that we have no reason in the world against fixing on the present time, but only because it is present: but when hereafter comes to be present, the reason will be just the same. But as for our unwillingness to leave our sins, if that be the reason of our delay, that will every day increase and grow more prevalent upon us: for sin gains upon the will by practice; the delight of it recommends it to the desire, and renders us more fond of its embraces: so that if we defer our repentance till hereafter, because we are unwilling to leave our sins, when that hereafter is present, we shall have much

more reason to defer than now: and so the plain sense of deferring our repentance upon this reason is this; "I cannot yet forsake my sins, because I love them, "and am highly pleased with them; but hereafter, I "am resolved, I will: but first, I will act them a little "longer, and grow more in love with them; and then, "when I love them more, and am more enslaved to "them, I will be sure to hate and forsake them for "ever." Whilst therefore we delay our repentance, because our sins do please us, we shall have the same reason to delay it for ever. For the longer we live in sin, in all probability the more it will please us; and so twenty years hence, the reason of our delay will be far more prevalent than now; and if we forsake not our sin till it ceases to please us, we shall never forsake it as long as we live. So that to resolve not to repent now, because our sins do please us, is the same thing in effect as to resolve not to repent at all: and indeed, this generally lies at the bottom of such resolutions, when men's consciences, like importunate creditors, begin to dun and clamour upon them, they are forced many times to give good words, and appoint some future day of payment, else they will put them to a great deal of trouble, and ever and anon arrest them with horrors and affrightments; but still they purpose to run further in debt, and to put off the day of payment from time to time, till they are utterly insolvent. So that by these promises of repenting hereafter, men only delude themselves; and under a specious pretence of future repentance put tricks upon their consciences to blind and bribe them, that they may not disturb them whilst they are sinning themselves into ruin.

3. By delaying our repentance, we deprive our-

selves of the satisfaction of having done what we must do at last, and prolong the pain and trouble of doing it. To have accomplished a necessary work, especially if it be difficult and important, is a great satisfaction to the mind: and whereas, whilst it is yet to do, the prospect of the pain and labour we must undergo in doing it creates in us a great deal of trouble and anxiety; when once it is done, the very reflection on the pains and labours we have past, sweetens our present repose, and crowns it with greater joy and triumph. And so it is with repentance, which we all acknowledge to be a most necessary work, and of the vastest moment and importance to us: and though it be never so painful and difficult, yet we must undergo it, or that which is much more intolerable: so that if once it were done, it could not but give a great satisfaction to our minds, and fill us with unspeakable joy.

When a man shall thus reflect with himself; "Blessed be God, I have done that work, which, "had it been yet to do, I must have done, or been "undone for ever. I charged through all those "pains and difficulties that were wont to startle and "affright me, and, by the grace of Heaven, am come "off victoriously. O happy achievement! how well "am I rewarded for all my labour! Now I am past "it, and settled in the quiet possession of my con-"quest!" When, I say, a man can thus reflect with himself, it must needs be unspeakable pleasure to him: whereas, he who defers his repentance, and hath it yet to do, is in perpetual pain and anxiety; whilst he thus considers with himself; "Alas! to re-"pent is a very sad and painful work; but yet at "last I must undergo it, or suffer that which is a

"thousand times more painful. I must lament and "weep for my folly, watch and pray against it, "struggle with and overcome it, or rue for it to all "eternity. O that it were done! But, O, how loath "am I to go about it! O that my pain were over! "But, O, how afraid am I to endure it!" Thus the poor wretch, for fear of pain, exposes himself to a lingering torment; and whilst by one brave attempt he may ease himself, and set his soul at rest for ever, he languishes away his life in misery, and is sick with the fear of his remedy: just like some men under the torments of the stone; they know they must be cut, or die; but the frightful apprehensions they have of their remedy makes them delay it from time to time. They will endure it, they say, rather than lose their lives; but when they come to the trial, their heart fails, and they must needs have a little longer respite; and all the while they are full of pain and uneasiness, and full of sad apprehensions of those severer pains they must endure in order to their recovery; and yet these at last they must endure too, or that which is much more terrible to them: whereas had they but endured them at first, they might have saved themselves all those torments, and all those fears of farther torments which they endured in the time of their delay. And is not this extremely absurd and ridiculous? And yet just thus it is with those who put off their repentance. Had they repented on their first lapse, their hearts might have been at ease a great while ago, and they might have saved themselves all those gripes and twinges of conscience which they have been forced to endure. But repentance, they thought, was a sad remedy; and the fear of that, too, augmented the torment of

their disease. But, be it never so sad, they know well enough they must at last apply it, or perish for ever. Well; but they will apply it, that they resolve on; but fain they would have a little longer respite. Ah foolish souls! Will it hereafter be more easy than now to you? Will your delay, do you think, mollify the pain and anguish of it? Alas! no, it will rather render it more dolorous. So that all the while you delay, and think of it only, but do not do it, you do but anticipate the torment and prolong the misery of it: and whereas, if once it were done, you would be at rest, and all the pain of your past guilt, and the fear of your future repentance would be over; whilst you only think upon it, but do it not, it is a continued disease to you; and the very apprehensions you have of it are many times more dolorous than the performance.

4. And lastly, To delay our repentance, is to do a thing upon no other presumption, but that we shall one day repent of our own action. And can there be any thing more ridiculous, than for a man to do an action, in hope that he shall live to repent of it? For either the action is reasonable, or it is not: if it be, why should he hope to repent of it? if it be not, why should he be so extravagant to do it? So that for a man to do a thing upon presumption that he shall repent of it, is to proclaim himself a fool: and yet this is the case of him who delays his repentance. For that this very delay is a sin, superadded to those criminal actions of which he ought to repent, I have already demonstrated: from whence it necessarily follows, that this must be repented of as well as those. So that for men to encourage them-

selves not to repent at present, in hope that they shall repent hereafter, is to act professedly contrary to the reasons of things. For if the nature of our delay is such, as that we have reason to hope we shall one day repent of it; this is so far from being a proper encouragement to it, that it is one of the strongest reasons that can be urged against it: and for a man to rob, in hope to be hanged for it, or to drink deadly poison, in hope to be convulsed and tormented with it, is every whit as wise and rational, as to delay our repentance, in hope to repent of it. For who but a madman, or one who is resolved to act counter to all rules of reason, would ever practise on this extravagant conclusion; "I will do this or that "action at present, in hope that hereafter I shall be "sorry for and extremely ashamed of it, and wish a "thousand times that I had never done it. I know "it is a great evil, and do plainly perceive that one "time or other I shall find it so: but, come what "will, I will venture upon it, in hope that hereafter "I shall be ashamed with the horror of it, and tor-"mented for it upon the rack of a self-condemning "conscience." And now, I beseech you, is this a reasonable hope, or proper encouragement for a wise man to act upon? or rather, is it not one of the most absurd and foolish, that ever any fool or madman proceeded on? And yet this is plainly the meaning of our pretension, when we delay our repentance, in hope to repent of it hereafter.

And thus you see how extravagantly absurd it is for men to defer and put off their repentance. So that methinks, had we any reverence for ourselves, any respect for those reasonable natures by which

we are constituted men, we should be ashamed to act so inconsistently with all the rules of reason and sobriety. And so I pass on to,

III. The third and last head; under which I proposed to demonstrate the mighty evil of delaying our repentance; and that is, the danger of it; which I shall endeavour to make appear in these following particulars:

1. Every delay of our repentance is a nearer approach towards final impenitence.

2. It is a desperate venture of our opportunity of repentance.

3. It endangers the forfeiting that grace, without the assistance whereof we cannot repent.

4. It drives us nearer to the last extremity.

1. Every delay of our repentance is a nearer approach towards final impenitence. For a sinful state is like a shelving pool, in which the farther a man wades, the deeper it is; and so, deeper and deeper, till he come to the bottom of it; and when we are there, we are sunk beyond all hope of recovery: so that at every step forward, we are in danger of going beyond our depth, and plunging into an irreversible ruin. For final impenitence, which is the consummation and perfection of all sin, is nothing but a persevering neglect or refusal to repent. And as a man is always dying, and that which we call death is only the last and finishing act of it: so final impenitence is not the sin of one day or moment, unless it be by accident; but it is a state of sin, begun as soon as ever the sin is acted, and carried on through each repeated action; and, in fine, is nothing but the same sin so many times told over. But if it should happen, that he who sinned yesterday should

die to-day, it would be final impenitence in him to defer his repentance that one day. So that our first delay of repentance is the beginning of our final impenitence, which in all its periods differs from the delay only by chance and accident: it is materially the same sin; and if death chance to strike the next moment, it will also have the same formality. For as he that dies young, dies as really as he that dies after fourscore years; so he that dies in the midst of a short delay of his repentance is as well finally impenitent, as he that is snatched away to die for ever after fourscore years' impenitence: for though the evil be not so great, nor the judgment consequent to it so heavy; yet is it as fatal and as irreversible, as the decree of damnation on the fallen angels. So that all the time we delay and put off our repentance, we are bordering on the worst of evils, we are just upon the confines of an irreversible mischief, and the next step, for all we know, may carry us beyond recovery. For if death should intervene between us and to-morrow, this day's delay will be fatal and irreparable. And can we stand upon the brinks of this precipice, and feel how the ground sinks underneath us, and yet sleep on securely, without ever thinking whither we are falling, or being in the least concerned at this amazing prospect of our danger? Methinks, if we had any concern for our own safety, we should think it high time now to start up, and run away from our neighbouring ruin, and not presume any longer to swim within the circumference of this fatal whirlpool, that is every moment sucking us in, and, for all we know, the next moment may swallow us up irrecoverably.

2. Every delay of our repentance is a desperate

venture of the opportunity we have to repent in; and that is this present life; which is the day in which we are to do our work, the time of trial, in which we are to pass our probation, and perform our exercise of eternity: and therefore, considering how uncertain this life is, and to how many events and casualties it is exposed, it must needs be a most desperate venture for a man to delay his repentance. For who can tell, but while we talk of repenting hereafter, there may be some latent disease undermining the fort of life, and ready to seize the garrison of our souls: so that perhaps, before this day is at an end, we may be surprised in the midst of our delay, and lose all our hopes of to-morrow? For what is vain man, that he should talk of repenting hereafter, when perhaps, whilst the word is in his mouth, there may be an imposthume in the head or breast, or a ripe hardened stone in his kidney, ready to drop down into his bladder the next moment; when he may be inflamed with a fever by what he drinks to-night, or drowned in a surfeit with what he eats to-morrow; when he may expire his soul with the next breath, or suck in poison with the next air; and so many unlooked for accidents may put an end to his talk of repenting hereafter, and render it impossible for ever? And suppose we should be thus surprised, as many others have been before us, that while we are merry and jolly in our sins, that all on a sudden we should be hurried away out of the company of our jovial associates, into that of howling and tormented spirits; and from our songs and laughter, into *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*; how should we be blanked and amazed, and with what horror and astonishment should we reflect upon

the woful change, and upon our own desperate folly, that was the cause of it! How dare we then talk of repenting hereafter, who cannot command one moment of future time, nor promise ourselves one day longer? When, for all we know, the hope of eternity, that is now in our hands, may be lost for ever, and drop through our fingers before to-morrow morning; and we that lie down this night, and sleep securely in our sins, may before the next twilight awake with horror and amazement in hell. Blessed God! that ever any reasonable creatures should be so stupified, to venture a soul and an everlasting interest on so great an uncertainty; and rather than begin his repentance to day, run the hazard of being eternally miserable to-morrow morning! that he, who will not trust his gold one hour in the possession of a thief, nor his life one minute within the reach of a lion's paw, should abandon his soul, whole months and years together, to the mercy of a danger great enough to distract all the wit of mankind, did they but fully understand it! Let us therefore consider, that the present time only is in our power; and that as for the future, it is wholly in God's: so that while we defer our repentance for the future, we as it were cast lots for our souls, and venture our everlasting hopes upon a contingency that is not in our power to dispose of. For all we know, this may be the evening of our day of trial; and if it be, our life and eternity depends upon what we are now doing. Wherefore it highly concerns us, as we regard our own safety, wisely to manage this last stake; the winning or losing whereof may prove our making or undoing.

3. Every delay of our repentance endangers the

forfeiture of that grace, without the assistance whereof we can never repent to purpose. For we can no more repent without God's grace, than we can live without our food. *No man can come to me*, saith our Saviour, *except the Father which hath sent me draw him*, John vi. 44. But since God hath promised, that if we *draw near to him, he will draw near unto us*, James iv. 8. that if we *work out our own salvation, he will work in us to will and to do*, Philipp. ii. 12. and that *he will give the Holy Spirit unto every one that asks him*, Luke xi. 13. since, I say, God hath thus entailed his grace upon our endeavours, repentance is within our power, so long as that grace is so; by which, if we do our endeavour, we shall be enabled to it. He who can repent by the grace of God, is able to repent so long as he is able to obtain his grace to assist and concur with his endeavours; but if he once withdraw his grace, and give us over to our own hearts' lusts, then are we no more able to repent by our own natural strength and power, than a clod of earth is to mount up to heaven, and fix itself a glorious star in the firmament. But all the time we do delay our repentance, we are wearying out the grace of God; which, whilst we are running away from God and our duty, follows us with importunities to return; but instead of complying with it, we still defer to listen to its solicitations, and put it off from time to time with false and empty promises; what can be expected, but that, after so many defeats and disappointments, it should at last abandon us to ourselves, and leave us to the miserable fate of our own folly and madness: and if once it doth so, farewell to all hopes of our recovery. Consider therefore, O thou vain man,

that sayest thou wilt repent hereafter. Must thou command God to wait thy leisure, or fasten his grace with such adamantine chains, as that it should never be able to get loose from thee? Art thou sure it will be always at thy beck, or that, notwithstanding thy long provocations, it will be ready to come to thy aid, whensoever thou callest for its assistance? For by promising to repent hereafter, thou dost not only promise for thyself, but for the grace of God too; whose assistance is as necessary to thy repentance, as thy own endeavour: and methinks it is a strange piece of confidence in thee, to promise for that which thou hast so much disobliged, and which upon that account thou hast so little reason to trust to. It is true God hath promised you his grace; but, I beseech you, where hath he promised that you shall have it when you please? or that, after all his tenders, and your scornful refusal of it, it shall be still at your choice, whether you will at last accept of, or again refuse it? For unless you can produce some such promise as this, you can have no reason to expect that God will still continue his grace to you, how long soever you refuse and reject it: and if he should at last deal by you as you have dealt by him, this will be the final issue; Because when he hath called, you have refused; when he hath stretched out his hand, you have not regarded; but have set all his counsels at naught, and would not hearken to his importunities: therefore, when you call, he will not answer; when you seek, he will not be found; but will even laugh at your necessity, and mock when your last extremity comes upon you. And should things be reduced once to this sad issue, woe be to us that ever we were born!

4. And lastly, Every delay of our repentance drives nearer to the last extremity, which is that of a death-bed repentance: and how great a one that is, I have already shewed you at large, and given you evident proof, that though it be not absolutely desperate, yet it is most fearfully hazardous and comfortless: and yet this is the common centre to which all our delays do naturally tend. We venture to sin on, because we know, that if we do repent, God will have mercy upon us; and so we do resolve upon both, that is, to sin now, and to repent hereafter. And by this train the Devil tolls us on through all the stages of sin and life, till we come to our death-bed; and then, when our time and strength is spent, we shall feel ourselves departing into a long eternity of weal or woe, and have nothing to bear us company thither, but our sins and guilts, which, if they be not cancelled in an instant, will consign us immediately to endless misery; and whether we look either within, or without, or above us, shall be able to see nothing but a black dismal cloud hanging over us, and causes of fear surrounding us on every side. How will our heart sink within us, and our soul quiver on our lips, to think how naked and harbourless she is left; having no other refuge to fly to, now the avengers of blood are at her heels, but only that wronged and affronted mercy which all her lifetime she spurned and trampled on! When we shall consider what a vast work we have to do, how little time we have to do it in, how our own strength is spent, and what little reason we have to expect that God should strengthen us by a miracle, in what a tumult will our souls be! How shall we quake and tremble, to think whither we are going, and what

will become of us for ever! Surely, if we die in our wits, and are not atheists or sots, it will be impossible for us to reflect on ourselves, and the fearful risk we are running, without extreme horror and amazement. For we must be strangely stupified, if when we perceive ourselves upon the confines of eternity, within a very few moments of being happy or miserable for ever, we do not awake from our security; and if we do, the vastness of the work that lies upon our hands, the number of the guilts that will stare us in the face, and the little time and power we have to perform the one and expiate the other, must needs put our guilty consciences into a fearful agony, and unchain and let loose all its terrors upon us: and then how miserable will our condition be, when we shall look about for comfort, and see nothing but God's everlasting threats ready to be fired and discharged upon us; and not one promise opening a door of hope, nor any arm of mercy held forth to catch us now we are leaping down into eternity; but hell gaping for us as wide as our grave, and both ready to receive a part of us and ourselves into those two sad habitations! O then shall we sigh and lament our folly, and curse our lingering delays, and wish a thousand and a thousand times we had begun our repentance sooner. This is the sad extremity whereunto we are driving in every delay of our repentance: and considering all these things, methinks, all these dangers, whereunto our delays expose us, should be enough to frighten the most resolute sinner into present purposes of amendment. And O would to God that this might be the happy effect of it! That men at last would be but so wise as to consider these things, how monstrously wicked, how

shamefully absurd, how fearfully dangerous it is for them to put off their repentance; and that considering this, they would be so kind to themselves as now at last to betake themselves to the discipline of a severe repentance. This, I know, is a word that men are extreme frighted at; they think, if once they betake themselves to repentance, they must encounter with vast difficulties, and enter into a very dolorous and unpleasant course of life; which, while they can live merrily in their sins, they are very loath to do. And indeed I cannot deny, but, after an habitual course of sin, our entrance into a penitent life will in all probability be attended with a great deal of sorrow and disquiet. But who can help this? It is you that have brought this inconvenience on yourselves, by deferring your repentance so long; and assure yourselves, the longer you defer it, the more difficult it will be whenever you begin. But, for God's sake, consider, sirs, which do you think will be more uneasy, to undergo the severities of repentance for a time, or hell-fire for ever; to weep for your sins whilst you have hope of mercy, to contest against them whilst you have a prospect of victory, or sigh and groan for them to all eternity, without any hope of ease or redemption? For whether you will or no, you must endure repentance or hell. And therefore, since there is no other remedy, at least be persuaded to choose that which is most tolerable: and if you do so, I am sure you must conclude, that it is infinitely easier to repent than be damned. But yet it is plain, that men do commonly fancy repentance to be much more grievous than it is: for could they once persuade themselves to resolve upon the work, and seriously to engage in it, they would find

the greatest part of the trouble were over: for the main difficulty of repentance lies in forming our resolution. This indeed will exact great consideration and vigorous struggling with the wicked habits and inclinations of our own natures. But when we have so far overcome ourselves, as to obtain a full and clear consent and resolution, we have passed the main brunt of our spiritual warfare: and if we have but the courage to keep our ground, we shall soon be crowned with the joys of victory; and that which seemed at first so frightful and terrible to us, will presently grow tolerable, and soon after easy, and after that, by degrees, so pleasant and delightful, that we shall prefer it before all the pleasures of sense, and feel ourselves infinitely more blessed and happy in it, than ever we were in the midst of the highest ravishments of our sinful delights. Come then, my brethren, let us stand no longer amusing ourselves with difficulties, but let us seriously consider the indispensable necessity of it, the great assistance God hath promised us, if we will speedily undertake it, and the immense rewards he proffers to encourage us to it; and let us never leave pressing ourselves with these considerations, till we have obtained of ourselves a full and free consent to it, and wrought our wills into a serious and hearty resolution. And when we have prevailed thus far, we have gotten over the greatest difficulty that lies between us and heaven; and if we do but vigorously pursue our resolution, our work will every day grow easier and easier, and so at last it will be our recreation, and we shall reap from it so much peace of conscience, so much joy in the Holy Ghost, such a calm and sweet enjoyment of ourselves, and such a

glorious hope of a future blessed immortality, as will carry us with unspeakable vigour through all the weary stages of our duty, till we are arrived to our journey's end, where all the sorrows of our repentance shall be swallowed up in everlasting joys and triumphs.

DISCOURSE VI.

UPON

LUKE XXII. 42.

——nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

THESE words are a part of our Saviour's prayer in his agony; in which his soul being at present under a mighty contest with the powers of darkness, and under a vigorous apprehension of his approaching passion on the cross, expresses an earnest but yet natural and innocent desire of deliverance; *Father, if thou be willing*, saith he, *remove this cup from me.* For his humanity, being now in a great measure deprived of the supports and comfortable influence of his divinity, and left alone to grapple by its own single strength with the powerful malice of men and devils, and being under a piercing sense of those mighty evils they intended against him, began to recoil and shrink, out of a natural desire to preserve itself: but yet this natural desire being perfectly under the government of his reason, and that as perfectly under the government of God, he does to this effect address himself to God; "Father, if it "be thy will, remove this cup from me. I do not "desire in the least to control or cross thy blessed "will in any thing; no, rather than thou shouldest "suffer the least disappointment in thy blessed in-"tentions, I am ready to undergo the utmost that "the malice of men and devils can inflict upon me: "but, alas! the evils that I feel and fear are so ex-"ceeding grievous unto flesh and blood, that, if it

" might be without contradiction to thy will, or pre-
" judice to thy gracious intentions to a sinful world,
" I cannot but earnestly desire that they might be
" removed from me. But if there be any the least
" competition between thy designs and my desires,
" so that they do not fairly agree and perfectly con-
" sist with one another, whatsoever I endure, not
" my will, but thine be done!"

Behold here a perfect pattern of submission to the will of God, and that under the most dismal and difficult circumstances. When he plainly saw it was the will of his Father to expose him to the utmost extremity of human misery, to object his naked breast to the utmost malice of men and devils; when, by the force of a most powerful instinct, his nature recoiled at the apprehension of it, and would fain have been excused; then did he supplicate on his bended knees, that his Father would not listen to the innocent language of his natural fears and desires, but that he would fully execute his own severe and terrible will upon him; *not my will, O Father*, i. e. not the will of my natural fear, and desire of self-preservation, *but thy will be done*; though it be to inflict on me the utmost misery that a poor innocent, as I am, can be exposed to. The words being thus explained, do naturally resolve themselves into this proposition:

That God's choices for us are much better than our own; and consequently, that, if it were in our power to determine which of the two would take effect, it would be very unreasonable not to choose what God hath chose for us.

The truth of which will evidently appear, if we consider these two things:

I. That God doth as really and heartily will what is good for us, as we do for ourselves.

II. That he knows much better what is good for us than we.

I. That God doth as really and heartily will what is good for us, as we do for ourselves; i. e. so long as we are proper objects of his good-will, and have not sinned ourselves into an utter incapacity of being beloved by him: for then the case quite alters, and that good-will, which he formerly bore us, converts into a severe resolution of making us dreadful examples to others; that so, when through our own obstinacy and incorrigibleness he can do no more good upon us, he may do good to others by us, and warn them not to imitate our actions by the fearful example of our sufferings. But so long as there is any hope of doing good upon us, he declares himself as heartily inclined to do good to us, as ever any man was to do good to himself. For what mighty designs hath he set on foot? what expensive methods hath he used to save us? in what passionate strains hath he expressed his good-will towards us, and with what restless importunity doth he court us to be happy? He swears by his own life that he desires not our ruin, but rather that we should return and live; and solemnly professes, that he *would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.* And when, with all his courtships and addresses, he cannot prevail upon our obstinacy, to dissuade us from ruining ourselves, he puts on the passions of a mournful friend, and with yearning bowels laments our fatal folly: by all which tender expressions he plainly declares, that he doth as heartily will our welfare, as we can do our own. But because a firm belief of

this principle is indispensably necessary to a free submission to his heavenly will, I shall endeavour briefly to demonstrate the truth of it from these four considerations:

1. That his interest in us is much greater than ours in ourselves.

2. That his own self-love doth as strongly incline him to will our good, as ours doth to will our own.

3. That in concerning himself about us he can have no other end to serve, than what we have in being concerned for ourselves.

4. That even that good-will that we bear to ourselves is only a derivation from, and participation of, that infinite good-will which he bears us.

1. That his interest in us is much greater than ours in ourselves. If we believe him to be the author of our beings, we must acknowledge him to have a most absolute and unalienable propriety in us; that what we are, as well as what we have, we hold from him, who is the head Landlord and supreme Proprietor of all those beings that are derived from him, even as brooks and rivulets owe their streams to the fountain whence they flow. And can we imagine him not to be greatly concerned for what he hath so great an interest in? or that he, who hath so much greater propriety in us, should have less regard for us than we have for ourselves? Can it be thought that the great Father of beings should be forgetful of his own offspring? that he, who hath imprinted on all other parents such a tender kindness toward their natural issue, should be so regardless of his own, as to expose them to a wide wilderness, and leave them there to shift for themselves? No, doubtless; the mighty interest he hath in us cannot but endear

his affections to us, and render him mightily concerned for our welfare. *Can the mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee, saith the Lord*, Isai. xlix. 15. For since every thing is naturally inclined to love its own, we cannot but conclude that the God of nature, from whom all natural inclinations spring, hath in himself a most tender regard for all that family of beings of which he is the parent; especially considering,

2. That his own self-love doth as strongly incline him to will our good, as ours doth to will our own. For if he love himself, as he cannot but do, being infinitely lovely; he must necessarily love what is like him, and affect to propagate his own resemblance. But no miserable thing can be like himself, who is infinitely happy; and therefore he cannot love to make others miserable, since in so doing he must affect to produce what is contrary to himself, which implies a plain contradiction. For unless he love our misery, he cannot be supposed to desire it, because, as I shall shew you by and by, himself can never be the better for it; and therefore, if he desire it, it must be for its own sake.

But how is it possible that the same Being should love contraries at the same time; that he should at once take delight in himself, and in what is most unlike him; or, which is the same thing, that he should be pleased with his own happiness and with our misery together. So that if he love himself, who is infinitely happy, his own self-love must necessarily incline him to will the happiness of others; and unless our happiness might be supposed to be prejudicial to

his, which is impossible, it would be an expression of hatred to himself to wish ill to his creatures. In his willing misery in us, he would manifest himself to be displeased with his own happiness, and openly declare that misery was much more grateful to him: for how can he love misery for itself, as he must needs do, if he take pleasure in ours, and at the same time love himself, who is so infinitely happy? This therefore we may build upon with as much confidence as upon any first principle in philosophy; that God hath the same reason to will our happiness as we have to will our own; that as we would be happy, because we love ourselves, so, because he loves himself, he would have us be so. He loves that others should be like him, even as every other being doth that loves: for what he loves in himself he must love in another, and that which he loves in another, where it is, he must love to propagate to another, where it is not; and consequently, as he must love our happiness, because he loves his own, even so, for the same reason, he must love to make us happy.

3. That in concerning himself about us, he can have no other end to serve, but what we have in being concerned for ourselves. He is so infinitely happy in himself, that he can neither conceive nor desire any good for himself, beyond what is contained within the immensity of his own being and perfections: so that now he can have no self-ends to serve, because he doth already enjoy all possible degrees of perfection and happiness, and so can desire nothing without himself as an addition to his own beatitude; which is so infinite already, that it will admit of no increase. From hence therefore we may

be assured, that he can have no other reason to concern himself about us, but only to do us good: for to do us mischief cannot be his end, because he can do himself no good by it; his happiness being already so complete, that it cannot possibly need our misery, either to increase or to serve as a foil to it. It is only want and indigence that make one being desire the misery of another. If I desire to rob another of his happiness, it is to increase or to secure my own; if I desire to make another miserable, it is either to preserve myself from being so, or to procure myself that ill-natured comfort of having a companion in misery. But God, by the boundless happiness of his nature, is infinitely raised above all such mean considerations, and therefore cannot have any temptation in his nature to do any thing but good to his creatures. But doth not the scripture tell us, that he *doeth all things for his own glory*, and that he obtains this end as well by punishing as by rewarding his creatures? Very true; but then it is to be considered, that the glory he aims at consists not in receiving of any good from us, but in doing and communicating of all good to us. For infinite goodness can no otherwise be glorified, than by its own overflowings and free communications; and it can no otherwise be glorified in the punishment of its creatures, but only as it doth good by it: for should it punish without good reason, it would reproach and vilify itself; but if it doth it for good reason, it must be because it is good, either for itself or others: for itself it cannot be; for how can an infinitely happy being reap any good from another's misery? And therefore it must be for the good of others, either to reduce those who are punished, or to warn others

by their example from running away from their duty and happiness. So that to do good is the end of God's punishment; and because it is so, he is glorified by it; and considering that he is so infinitely happy, that he can no ways serve himself by our miseries, it is impossible he should have any other end in concerning himself about us, but only the great and godlike one of doing us good, and making us happy. For the very notion of an end includes good; and therefore, since the end of God's concern about us cannot be his own good, it must necessarily be ours.

4. And lastly, That even that good-will that we bear to ourselves is only a derivation from, and participation of, that infinite good-will which God bears us. For it is plain that our natural instincts and propensions must be derived from the same fountain with our natures, and consequently, that God is the author of both; and if so, then that unquenchable self-love and thirst after happiness which is implanted in our natures must needs be derived from him, and owe its original to some overflowing spring of love and benevolence in his bosom. For what should move him so to contrive the frame of our natures, as that we cannot but love ourselves and breathe after our own happiness, but only his own good-will to us and tender care of our happiness? What other end could he propose to himself, in stamping this vehement propension in our natures, only to excite us by it to be careful of ourselves, and to pursue our own interests? Doubtless, if he had not loved us more than we love ourselves, he would never have caused us to love ourselves as we do; since he could have no other aim in causing us to

do so, but only to oblige us to befriend ourselves, and contribute all we are able to our own welfare. And since it was out of mere love to us that he made us to love ourselves, and our own self-love is nothing else but a ray and participation of his benevolence towards us, we may be sure it is purer in the fountain than it can be in the channel, that it is much more intense and vigorous in his bosom than in our own. For as the natural love of all parents towards their offspring is a plain instance of the indulgent care which the great Father of beings hath for all his children, that he hath committed them in their infancy to such tender nurses as will be sure to take care for them when they cannot provide for themselves; that he hath not intrusted them to the compassion and good nature of other beings, to be maintained by the alms and benevolence of their fellow-creatures, but hath taken security for their liberal nurture and education from the inmost bowels of their parents: so that vehement propension of self-love which God hath implanted in us, is a most genuine signature and impression of his benevolence towards us; and shews how careful he was of us, thus to take security of ourselves for our own welfare, and to oblige us to be happy, by the most tender and vigorous passion in our natures. By all these considerations, I think, it is as clear as the sun, that God doth heartily love us, and hath as unfeigned a good-will for us as we can have for ourselves; so that, unless we can suppose, that we are better able to choose for ourselves than he, we have at least as much reason to acquiesce in his choices for us as in our own. It is plain, he is as much our friend as ourselves, and therefore,

though what he wills and chooses for us may in some particulars appear very harsh and severe, yet that his intention is good, and that he means as well towards us as we can do towards ourselves; and therefore, if in the event it prove not as well for us as our own contrary will and choice would have done, we may be sure that it was not want of good will to us, but for want of skill to choose what was best for us. But if it appear, that he doth not only wish as well to us as we do to ourselves, but also that he knows how to choose for us a great deal better than we; then we have all the reason in the world to acquiesce in his choices, how grievous soever they may appear to us, and to join heartily with our Saviour in this excellent petition, *Not our wills, O Father, but thy will be done.* Which brings me to,

II. The second general head of discourse; that as God hath as good a will to us as we have to ourselves, so he knows much better what is good for us than we. And to prove the truth of this, it is sufficient that God infinitely exceeds us in knowledge and understanding; he being omniscient, and having all things before him in one entire view and prospect; whereas *we see but in part, and know but in part,* and are extremely shallow and superficial in our conceptions of those things that lie before us, which must necessarily render us infinitely less capable of judging what is good for ourselves than he. And this will more plainly appear, by particular instances, of which I shall only produce these five:

1. That we many times know only what is good for ourselves singly; but God knows what is good for us, as we are parts of the whole in conjunction with it.

2. We many times know only what is good for us, with respect to such a particular end; but God knows what is good for us in the main.

3. We many times know this or that to be good for us singly, and apart by itself; but God knows whether it be good for us in conjunction with those concomitants and consequents that are necessary to it.

4. We many times know only what is good for us in respect to our present temper and disposition; but God knows what is good for us in reference to our constant and most abiding disposition.

5. We many times know what is good for us, with respect to this present state of things; but God knows what is good for us, in reference to our eternal condition. In all which instances, I doubt not to make it appear, that God is much fitter to choose for us than we for ourselves.

1. That we many times know only what is good for ourselves singly; but God knows what is good for us as we are parts of the whole, and in conjunction with it. Man is naturally a sociable creature, and as such can never be happy alone. His music is always best in consort: when it consists of numerous voices, every one bears a part with every one. And since our nature is such, as that we are not comparably so well pleased with solitary, as with sociable fruitions, it is every single man's interest, that his own private good should not be separated from the good of the whole; that it should not grow like a wen, by engrossing the nourishment that is due to all the other parts, but rise and increase in such just proportions as is consistent with the happiness of all the rest: and there is no man whatsoever, that hath the least spark of generosity in him,

but, to contribute to a public good, would joyfully submit to a great many private inconveniencies; and would reckon his own personal damage fairly compensated, by the advantage that the public receives by it. But so narrow and confined is our prospect of things, that in our private choices we many times ignorantly separate our own interest from the public's, and choose that for ourselves, which, should we obtain, would prove very injurious to the whole. We would fain change our present condition for some other, which we have reason to believe would be much more advantageous to us; but should we obtain our desire, it may be, the public would be much more injured by it, than ourselves could be benefited. Perhaps we are fittest to do good in our present station; or, should we remove, some unworthy person may get in our room; or some person that is more worthy than ourselves may be displaced by us; and by a thousand other ways, which we are not able to comprehend, our shifting of places may so puzzle and disorder the well-laid scene of affairs, that, had we foreseen it at first, we should much rather have chosen to keep where we are. Again, we lie under the sense or apprehension of some great calamity; and doubtless, if we might choose for ourselves, we would immediately be delivered from it: but did we always foresee how much good others may reap from our sufferings, how much our private infelicity may conduce to the weal of the public, I hope we should not be such narrow-spirited persons, as, for the sake of our present ease, to neglect so fair an opportunity of being public benefactors to the world. But now God hath such an entire prospect of all things before him, that he plainly sees all the little

dashings and interferings of men's private with the public good. And as he knows that we cannot be happy alone, so he resolves that we shall not: for he never wishes any man's private good separately from that of the public; but in one steady drift he carries on the interest of each single part in conjunction with the interest of the whole. And hence, in the prosecution of single ends, we see, he is not always wont to proceed in the most direct and compendious way, but oftentimes winds about in a large circuit, in which he infolds and takes in a thousand concurrent and subordinate designs; and drives them all at once before him in the course and series of his providence. And though in this general drift of things the concerns of particular men are sometimes set forwards and sometimes backwards, in pursuance of the main design, yet all at last conspires in the public good, whereof each particular hath a share. And therefore, though for the public good we sometimes suffer a present inconvenience, yet since we cannot be happy but in society, it is much better for us that we should be damaged than the public, because the happiness of each particular member redounds from the welfare of the whole society, and is necessarily involved in it: and did we but rightly understand our own interest, we should never esteem any thing good for ourselves that is a nuisance to the public; because whatsoever this suffers, I and every man suffer; and unless I could be happy alone, that can never be for my interest in particular that is against any interest in common. Since therefore the happiness of every part is included in that of the whole, and consequently whatsoever promotes the public good is beneficial to each particular member, it hence neces-

sarily follows, that God can choose much better for us than we." For whereas generally our foresight is limited within the narrow horizon of our own particular concerns, by reason whereof we cannot many times avoid choosing against the common interest; God hath the whole series of things before him, and so must necessarily see, even from the beginning to the end, what is for the public interest, and what not; and therefore, since he who is sole administrator of the public bank of human interest knows how to make the best improvement of it, it is doubtless much more advantageous for us, that he should manage all our particular shares of it, than that we should reassume them in our own hands, and manage them separately by themselves: and though under his conduct and management we suffer some present inconveniencies, yet so long as we are sure of this, that the public good requires it, and it is promoted by it, we have all the reason in the world to be satisfied. And this was the case in the text. The inconvenience which our blessed Lord did here so earnestly deprecate was indispensably necessary for the commonweal of men, in which himself had a large share, being a member of the corporation of mankind: so that had God granted his desire, and excused him that bitter cup he drank, not only mankind in general, but himself in particular, as he was a man, would have been very much damnified by it. For he would have been deprived of those felicities which he now enjoys in common with us, as he is the Head of a glorious church, whom he redeemed and purchased with his blood: he would have fallen short of that mediatorial dignity to which he is now advanced, and lost the satisfaction of being the author

of our happiness, and seeing the blessed fruits of the travail of his soul: by all which he hath been abundantly compensated for those momentary sufferings he endured. So that in the issue, we see, it was well for him, as well as for us, that the will of God took place, his own personal share in the common happiness of men being enough to recompense him a thousandfold for whatsoever he suffered to procure it. Upon this account therefore it is best that God should choose for us; because he always chooses what is good for us in conjunction with the public; in the prosperity whereof all our particular welfare is involved.

2. We many times only know what is good for us with respect to such a particular end; but God knows what is good for us in the main. The generality of men, we see, are so rash and precipitant in pursuit of their particular ends, that they commonly overlook those things that are of more general and catholic concern to them; and run themselves upon a thousand inconveniencies for the sake of such particular goods as can never make them any reasonable amends. Thus in our worldly affairs, how often do we endanger our main interest, by snatching too greedily at some present good? We think, if we had it, it would serve such a purpose, and conduce to such a desired end; but when we have it, it proves a mischief to us, and disappoints us of other ends and purposes, which are of much greater weight and moment to us: and, I believe, there is no man that hath been but a diligent observer of his own affairs, but hath found by experience, that many of those things which for such or such purposes he hath earnestly coveted, have proved in the main extremely preju-

dicial to him; that either his health or his estate, his peace or his reputation, which are the main ingredients of our temporal welfare, hath been very much impaired by the acquisition of some of those goods which he most impatiently longed for. And how often have we seen men impoverished by those pleasures, disquieted by those profits, made infamous by those honours, and unhealthful by that ease which they have doted on, and pursued with the greatest impatience! So fond are we generally of our little particular ends, that in the prosecution of them we seldom consult our main interest; we consider only, that this or that good will serve this or that purpose, and so we immediately let fly our desires and endeavours after that, without ever inquiring whether it will not be more prejudicial to us in general, than it can be beneficial in this or that particular: in which case, if we had but our own wills, we should many times ruin ourselves for trifles, and sacrifice all the happiness of our lives to the present gratification of some fond and unreasonable desire.

But now God, in the conduct and management of our affairs, considers our whole case, and hath all our circumstances together in his view, and so cannot but know whether this or that particular good be consistent with our welfare in the general: and whereas we, like men in a fever, do for our present ease and refreshment oftentimes long most impatiently for what is most hurtful and injurious to us, God, like a wise physician, consults our future health more than our present ease; and having an infallible prospect of our whole case and circumstances, suits all his prescriptions to the necessities of our condition, and not to the blind impatiencies of our appetites

and longings. He many times plainly sees, that what we desire would be our bane; and therefore, out of tender mercy, chooses rather to deny us than to destroy us. That patient would be accounted very unreasonable, that should fall out with his physician for disturbing his sleep when he is inclining to a lethargy, or denying him drink in a fever or a dropsy; because, though what he desires is good for those particular ends of his ease and refreshment, yet it is apparently destructive to him in the main. Thus, doubtless, it would have been very well for Joseph, as to many particular ends, not to have been sold by his brethren or imprisoned in Egypt; and doubtless, had it been left to his own option, he would much rather have chosen to continue at home, under the care and patronage of an indulgent father: but had he seen, as God did, from the first link of the chain of his fate to the last, and how inseparably his after-advancement was connected to his present sufferings, in the course and series of things, he would doubtless have willingly chosen as God did for him; since, though the contrary had been well for him in some particulars, yet this was much better in the general.

3. We many times know only this or that to be good for us singly, or apart by itself; but God knows whether it be good for us in conjunction with those concomitants and consequents that in the course of things are necessary to it. For the divine providence, which runs through all things, hath disposed and connected them into such a series and order, that there is no single event or accident (but what is purely miraculous) that depends not on the whole, and hath innumerable causes antecedent to it, innumerable concurrences going hand in hand with it, and innu-

merable consequents attending it. But so narrow and confined is our prospect of things, that we only see that part of their series and order that is at present before us: and there are innumerable things, both concomitant and consequent to every event, that are out of the sphere of our cognizance; by reason of which it is impossible for us to make any infallible judgment, either of the good or evil of almost any event that befalls us; because, though we may be secure that such an event, single or apart by itself, may be good or evil for us; yet, for all we know, in the whole series of things, there be such concomitant or consequent events inseparable to it, as may quite alter its nature, and render that evil, which considered singly may be good for us; or that good, which considered singly may be evil. So that in our choice of events, we are necessitated for the most part to choose in the dark; because we see so little of the whole series of things, and of the circumstances wherewith events are accompanied and attended, that it is not in our power to determine which is good or which bad for us. We many times look on such an event as highly good for us, and extremely desirous; and believe that if we should compass it, we should be extremely happy: but, poor short-sighted creatures that we are, we see neither the company nor the train of it. If this event doth befall us, according to the series of things, a thousand others must; and what they will prove, we are not able to prognosticate; and, for all we know, the mischief of them may abundantly outweigh the behefit of this; and did we but foresee all that goes along with, and all that must follow it, we should be many times most afraid of what we most eagerly desire.

This therefore being our case, how extremely unfit are we to make choices for ourselves; since it is almost an equal lay, whether what we choose will prove our food or poison. But God, being the supreme orderer and disposer of things, must needs have them all together entirely in his view; and having the first link of the whole chain of causes in his own hands, cannot but plainly see all the intermediate ones from the beginning to the end. And since his power is the cause, not only of all actual events, but even of the possibility of those that shall never be actual, he must needs discern the utmost issues of every possible as well as actual event, and see the remotest effects and consequents that are in the wombs of all actual and possible causes and principles: and having all things that are, or that may be, in his view, he doth not only see what is good or hurtful to us, but what would be so, if it were actual and existing. So that he needs not try experiments upon us, to know what is beneficial or injurious to us; because the operation and consequence of every possible event is as obvious to his all-comprehending knowledge, before, as after it is befallen us. And hence it is impossible for him to be mistaken in his choices; because he knows as well beforehand what things would be, if they were, as what they are, when they actually exist. And though we may sometimes pervert the nature of things by our abuse of them, and make that evil to us which is really good; yet God cannot be mistaken, so as to prescribe us for physic what is in its own nature poison; and consequently, if he love us but as well as we love ourselves, (as I have demonstrated he doth,) he must needs choose better for us than we; because he sees the utmost

consequents of all that doth or can befall us; and so cannot be imposed on by shows and false appearances, as we oftentimes are. And of this I shall only give you one instance; which is that of good old Jacob, when he lost his son Joseph; which we plainly see by the sorrow he expressed, as it was an accident that happened sore against his will, and which he would have gladly prevented, had he been but aware of it. But it is plain the good man saw but a little way into the series of things; he saw his loss, but he saw not the issues of it: for, doubtless, had he beheld that train of happy consequents that was chained and annexed to it; how it tended, not only to Joseph's advancement, but to the preservation of himself and his family from the ensuing famine, he would doubtless have been more a friend to himself, and a father to his family, than to have counter-voted God in his choice and election for him. But it was well for Jacob that God saw farther into the consequents of things than he; for if he had not, not only Joseph had missed of his preferment, but himself and all his family had been in a great deal of danger of perishing in the famine. So that when all is done, you see, the wisest course we can take, is, to resign up ourselves into the hands of God; who, seeing the utmost issues and consequents of things, can never be mistaken in choosing what is best for us.

4. We many times know only what is good for us with respect to our present temper and disposition; but God knows what is good for us in reference to our constant and most abiding condition. We are a sort of creatures that are extremely fickle and mutable; our humours change upon every new occasion, and our desires, like the weathercocks, look contrary

ways upon every contrary wind; now we are of one mind, and by and by of another; this seems to us now, and anon the quite contrary; and oftentimes in the same hour we are several sorts of men. But still we choose according to our present temper, and so still, as this alters, our latter choices thwart and run a tilt at our former. So that should every thing happen to us that we desire and wish for, we should be the most miserable creatures in the world; since what we choose in this hour we should reject in the next, and what we longed for to-day we should be sick of to-morrow. And since no man certainly knows now what mind he shall be of anon, for all that he can tell, that which is most agreeable to him now, may be most disagreeable to him then; and if he should change his present mind, as it is very likely he may, he will immediately unwish what he now wishes for, and dearly repent of what he most heartily chooses. How then is it possible that we should choose well and wisely for ourselves, all whose choices do depend on a temper that is so everlastingly fickle and variable? But now God, who foresees what our most constant, lasting, and durable temper will be, is much better able to adapt events to it, and to contrive all our circumstances into a fair accommodation with it: and though it is impossible but he must sometimes cross us, because our humours do so vary, and we do so often cross and contradict ourselves; yet, knowing best what our standing and permanent temper will be, he must needs know best also what will be most constantly convenient for us and agreeable to us. For if he be cordially our friend, as it is apparent he is, he will not so much consult the gratification of our peevish, fickle, and unconstant hu-

mours, as of our most permanent temper and disposition; and if he know much better than we what our most permanent temper and disposition will be, as it is apparent he doth, he must needs be much abler to suit and accommodate it with convenient events and circumstances. Of this you have a remarkable instance in the method of God's conducting Israel out of Egypt into Canaan. Doubtless, had they had their own choice, they would have been immediately translated from their miserable bondage into that happy land: but God knew their standing temper better than they did their own; he saw they were a stupid, stubborn, and untractable people, and as yet wholly uncapable of such a propitious change; and that if he had conducted them into Canaan directly, and in a moment, they would have presently forgot their Benefactor, and let loose themselves to all licentiousness and wickedness; which must have naturally shortened their prosperity, and hastened it into an untimely ruin: and therefore God saw it necessary to continue them some time longer in Egypt, that so, by his mighty works there, he might awaken their stupid minds into an awful sense of his majesty and power. And when, by his outstretched arm, he had brought them out of Egypt, he made them wander about forty years in the wilderness: whereas, had he led them directly on, a very few days' marches would have brought them into Canaan. But he considered their stubborn temper, which was not yet capable to bear a prosperous condition, till it was throughly disciplined for it in the school of affliction; till it was broken, and tamed, and civilized, and rendered more tractable and obsequious. And though in thus dealing with them he acted quite contrary to

their present humour and desires; yet did he act most advantageously for them, considering their standing genius and temper: for had he transmitted them into Canaan with all those barbarous conditions that they brought out of Egypt, their prosperity would have only heightened their insolence, and hastened their ruin: and accordingly, Deut. viii. Moses tells them at large, that all God's severities to them in the wilderness were to dispose them for the happy condition of Canaan; to prove and polish them, to break and humble their untractable spirits, and do them good in the latter end; as you may see, ver. 2, 3, 5, 16. And if God choose to do what is best for us, with respect to our standing temper and disposition, we have no reason to complain that he sometimes crosses our more fickle and variable humours and fancies.

5. And lastly, We many times know only what is good for us with respect to this present state of things; but God knows what is good for us in reference to our eternal condition. For we being a sort of creatures that are born to live for ever, in eternal weal or woe, it is really a matter of very small moment to us, whether we are happy or miserable here; it is no more than a short night's dream of pain or pleasure to a man that hath fourscore or a hundred years to consume in delights or torments; and when we awake in eternity, all that is past will seem a dream to us in the presence of those never-ending ages of joy or misery before us. But yet so fond are we generally of the present, that we most commonly choose without any regard to the future. In our choice of objects, we seldom project beyond our present pleasure; if the thing will but please us now, we rarely

trouble our heads to inquire what influence it may have on our eternal pleasure or pain; yea, and many times if we should, it would be to no purpose; because in most of those goods we choose and covet, there are a thousand snares we cannot discern, as well as a thousand advantages which we are not aware of, in those evils and calamities which we run away from. We are not able to foresee how many ways our souls may be endangered by those outward goods we covet; nor yet how many spiritual blessings those outward evils may be pregnant with, at which we are so startled and affrighted; so that in most of our choices, we can look no farther than our present convenience; but what effect they may have upon our everlasting fate, we can never certainly know, till the event hath determined it. Thus in this great lottery of goods and evils, we shortsighted creatures are fain to choose at a venture; and till the event hath determined what our choices are, we know not whether they are blanks or prizes. So that if we always had what we choose, God only knows the mischief that would follow upon it: for to be sure, every man would be prosperous; and if every man were so, how many thousands would perish for ever, for want of the saving remedy of affliction; which is as indispensably necessary to the reclaiming of some persons, and putting them into a capacity of happiness, as food is to satisfy our hunger, or nourishment to sustain our lives. Lord, what miserable creatures then should we be, shouldst thou be so regardless of us, to allow us our wills, who, having so small a prospect beyond this state of things, should many times, for the sake of a present convenience, choose what might occasion our eternal woe!

But God, being our best friend, must needs be supposed to intend our main interest; which being lodged in our eternal state, he must needs be much more concerned about, than about our happiness and conveniencies in this present condition: nor indeed would he be our friend, should he advance our present interest to the prejudice of our souls and immortal concerns. So that if he love us, as we are most sure he doth, the main drift and design of his providence over us must be to secure our happiness in the world to come; and when this cannot be secured but by the damage of our earthly enjoyments, it is a mercy and kindness to us, to fling that lumber overboard, to save our precious and immortal freight. But he having a most perfect intuition of the inmost nature and utmost consequents of things, cannot but discern all those stops and turnings where our temporal and eternal interest do clash and interfere with one another; and having a perfect insight of all their competition, where the one cannot be advanced without the depression of the other, he must needs know, infinitely better than we, how to prefer our main interest, and to choose what is best for us. For he knowing best what our temper is, and what the consequents of things are, cannot be ignorant of what is best for us, and most conducive to our eternal interest; whether prosperity or adversity be safest for our souls, and most for the security of our virtue and innocence; and knowing this, he can so accommodate all events to our spiritual necessities, as that they shall all work together for our eternal good. And if at any time he sees it necessary for our spiritual good, to instruct us by rods, or to discipline us by affliction, it is infinite mercy in

him to cross our blind wills, by interrupting our beloved ease and prosperity. And if we saw but what he sees, when he corrects and chastises us, and knew the reasons of his actions, we would doubtless beseech him to do as he doth; and whilst we were smarting under his lashes, we should be adoring his goodness for making such wise provision for our welfare. Thus, when David was hunted, *like a partridge on the mountains*, by those successive afflictions which God let fly at him, he doubtless concluded himself to be very severely dealt with; and would God but have allowed him to choose his own fate, he would much rather have chosen to have lived in an uninterrupted calm of prosperity, than to be exposed, as he was, to the incessant storms of an adverse fortune. But when experience had better instructed him what were the reason of God's actions, how necessary they were to correct his follies and curb the extravagancies of his nature; he was then plainly convinced, that God had dealt much better by him than he would have dealt by himself; and was forced to acknowledge, that it was well for him that he was afflicted; *For before I was afflicted*, saith he, *I went astray: but now have I kept thy commandments*, Psalm cxix. 67.

So that by all these instances you plainly see, that God can choose much better for us, than we for ourselves; and therefore, if to this you add what hath been so largely proved, that he is as heartily our friend as we can be our own, it will from hence necessarily follow, that it is much better for us, that his will concerning us would take effect, than any contrary will or desire of our own.

What then remains, but that with all cheerfulness

and alacrity we resign up ourselves into the hands of God, and submit all our choices and desires to his heavenly will; who, having as unfeigned an affection for us as we can have for ourselves, and much better prospect of our affairs than we, must needs manage our concerns to much greater advantage than it is possible for us to do. Why then should we murmur and repine at any thing that befalls us? Are we wiser than God? No. Or can we pretend to be more careful of our interest than he is? Neither. In the name of goodness, what would we be at, then? Would we have him resign up our concerns to ourselves, and not intermeddle any farther in our affairs? God forbid, that either he should have so little regard of us, or that we should be such traitors to our own interest! For on this side hell, I know nothing more formidable, than for God to let us alone, and give us up to our own wills and desires. And if I should hear him thus bespeaking me from the battlements of heaven, "O foolish creature, since what I do will "not please thee, and thou art so dissatisfied with "my conduct and management, from henceforth I "will cross thy desires no more; but, let the event "prove good or bad, I will comply with thy choices, "and order all things to happen to thee according "to thy own will;" I think, I should look on myself as the most forlorn and abandoned wretch on this side hell; as one utterly excluded from the greatest blessing that belongs to a creature; and if I had any hope of his re-acceptance, I would on my bended knees resign back myself, and all that concerns me, into his hands again. I would beseech him, above all things, not to leave me to myself; not to throw me from his care, or discharge me from his conduct;

and if I could prevail with him to take me again into his care and protection, I would promise never to repine against him more, but cheerfully submit to his heavenly will, how severely soever he should think good to deal with me. And this, not only I, but every man else would do, that truly loves himself, and understands his own interest: for where can our concerns be better or safer lodged than in the hands of that infinite wisdom, that knows what is best for us; and that infinite goodness, that wills what it knows best; and of that infinite power, that doth what it wills? Why then should any man be displeased that his affairs are not managed his own way, when we are so sure of this, that they are managed by one that hath much more skill to manage them than we; and one that, having the same love for us that we have for ourselves, will be sure to manage them to the best advantage? And since there is the same benevolence towards us in God's will, that there is in ours towards ourselves, how much better is it for us that his should take effect, that is guided by such an infallible wisdom, than ours, that hath nothing to conduct and steer it but a blind sense, or at best a shortsighted reason? Wherefore, though our affairs go never so contrary to our wills in this present state of things, yet this we may build upon, that it is best that things should be as God will have them. And, as when we are grown up to the age of men, we thank our parents for those loving severities they exercised towards us when we were children, and not able to govern ourselves; because then we see, that if they had let us have our childish wills, and given the reins to our wild passions and appetites, we should, in all probability, have undone our-

selves: so when we come to our full stature in Christ, and are grown up into a state of perfection, then we shall see reason to admire and praise the goodness of God for those merciful denials and kind severities, upon the account of which we now murmur and repine against him; and be fully convinced, that it was happy for us that we were not suffered to be our own carvers; but had all our allowances carved out to us by the wise and gracious providence of our heavenly Father. Whensoever therefore we are crossed by his providence in any of our desires, let us but consider how unfeignedly he loves us, and how much more fit he is to choose for us than we; and then we shall see infinite reason to acquiesce in his providence, and to join with our Saviour in this excellent prayer, *Father, not our wills, but thy will be done.*

END OF VOL. IV.

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